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ISSUE 90

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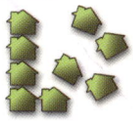

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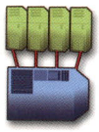

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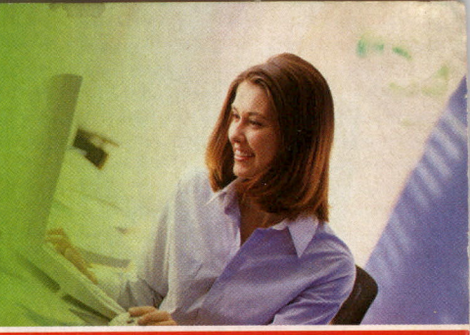

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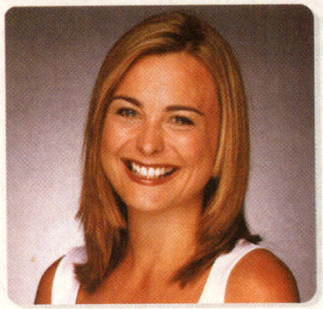

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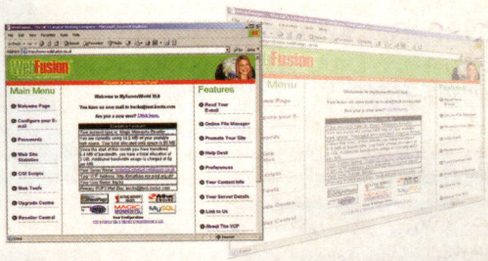

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HIGHBURY ENTERTAINMENT

13,265 July-December 2002

WELCOME

PLAY THE GAME

Every designer has the same daydream about building the next big thing – the site that suddenly catches on and gets loads of visitors. In fact, unless you're some kind of masochist, this is more than likely your main aim as you set about building any site. Creating that ever elusive viral factor isn't easy – only a select few sites manage to catch on enough to be the subject of forwarded emails in offices up and down the country – but that doesn't mean you should throw in the towel.

The infuriating thing for many designers is that no matter how masterfully you fashion page after page of perfect navigation and content, people will often take little notice of your site. To really make your site stand out in people's minds, you need to give them another reason to stick around. Whatever your thoughts on the subject, the number one method of achieving this is to incorporate a Flash game. Think about it – how many times have you found yourself throwing a virtual paper ball into a virtual wastebasket for longer than you intended? Why? Because it's fun, and if you can make your site fun, you're well on the way to success.

So get set for the ultimate guide to creating games in Flash. Get ready to be inspired by our features – then just when you think we've left you to fend for yourself, turn to page 70 for a massive ten-page walkthrough on creating your very own Flash game. It's everything you need...

Thomas Watson, Editor
thomas@paragon.co.uk

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THE PRACTICAL INTERNET WEB DESIGNER PROMISE

Design focus
Practical Internet Web Designer is the only monthly UK magazine devoted solely to helping you improve your site-building skills. Every month, we focus on the key programs that Web designers of all experience and expertise use: Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Flash. Unlike other titles, we don't shy away from developer issues either, with a section dedicated to hand coding.

Expert help
Each issue of *Practical Internet Web Designer* comes packed with detailed tutorials and indispensable tips and tricks. A dedicated helpdesk section features a team of hand-picked experts to answer your Web design queries. What's more, every article in the magazine is written by an expert in the relevant field.

Practical advice
We are committed to bringing you results, so any tutorial you follow will yield impressive returns that you can use on your own site. To make things easier, the cover disc contains files for you to get started on every tutorial within the magazine.

COVER ART: TADO

We set wacky Web design team Tado the challenge of creating us a memorable character within a game-like setting, and they produced this fantastic image using Flash's drawing tools. Turn to page 14 to hear Tado's take on how the cover was produced.

YOUR GUIDE TO THIS ISSUE...

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ISSUE 90 YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THIS ISSUE OF PRACTICAL INTERNET WEB DESIGNER

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FEATURE

BUILD BRILLIANT FLASH GAMES

- Learn the techniques the professionals use to create stunning Flash games
- Discover the secrets behind getting your first game off the ground
- Make your site stickier than it's ever been with our guide

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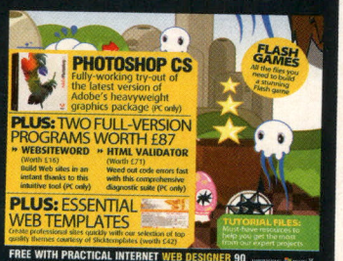

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FEATURE

CREATE ACCESSIBLE WEB SITES

- Get the inside story on how to make your site available to everyone
- Quick tricks that will save you loads of time in the long run
- The sites you need to visit to keep your site accessible

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Essential advice for designers and developers

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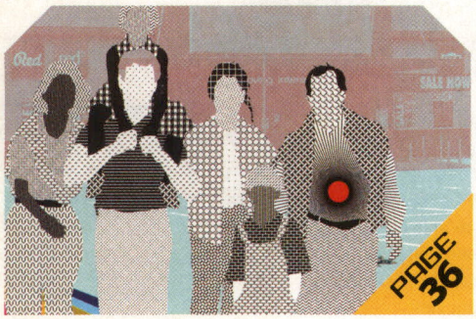

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BUILD STUNNING PAGES WITH CSS

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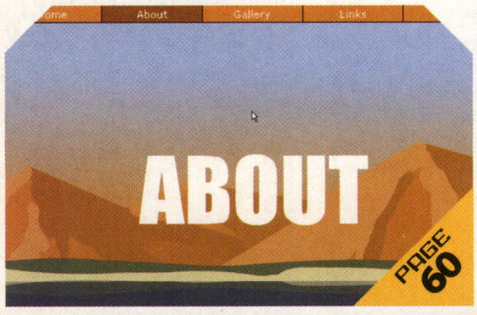

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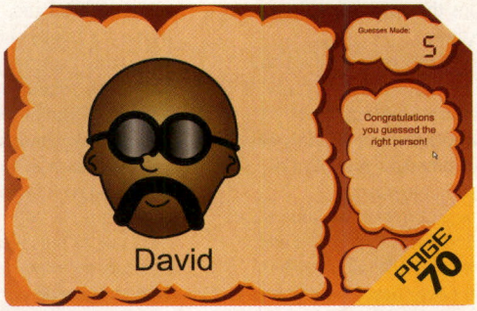

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SUPPORT

TECH SUPPORT

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THE LATEST WEB DESIGN NEWS

BULLETIN

YOUR ESSENTIAL ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST EVENTS IN THE WORLD OF WEB DESIGN, GRAPHICS CREATION AND SITE DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR MX 2004 UNLEASHED

Macromedia's leading multimedia authoring suite set to delight designers with new feature-laden MX 2004 update

Macromedia has unveiled the next eagerly awaited instalment of its popular Director package, following in the footsteps of the rest of the acclaimed MX 2004 range.

The industry-leading vendor has cemented its reputation with the latest versions of Dreamweaver and Flash MX, and clearly hopes to revamp the multimedia development tool with a raft of exciting new features.

For over a decade, Director has paved the way for innovative techniques in dynamic content creation, with its unique capability for multi-platform deployment underpinning its success.

Users will now not only be able to look forward to once-only authoring of CD, DVD, Internet and kiosk applications, but also improved Flash MX 2004 integration.

Aside from greater support for the SWF format and almost all major video, audio, 3D and image formats, it is now possible to merge Flash and Director projects with a much greater level of performance. This is exemplified by the provision of pre- or custom-built Flash components that can be used to create highly sophisticated interfaces, while special 'Xtras' plug-in architecture allows users to extend Director's functionality even more.

However, arguably the most significant feature of the update is the decision to offer an alternative coding language alongside the ever-present Lingo. Director MX 2004 includes full JavaScript syntax support for the first time, and enables seamless coding combinations that improve efficiency and productivity.

"Macromedia Director defined both this company and this industry, and it remains the most sophisticated multimedia authoring tool to this day," insisted Macromedia's president of products, Norm Meyrowitz.

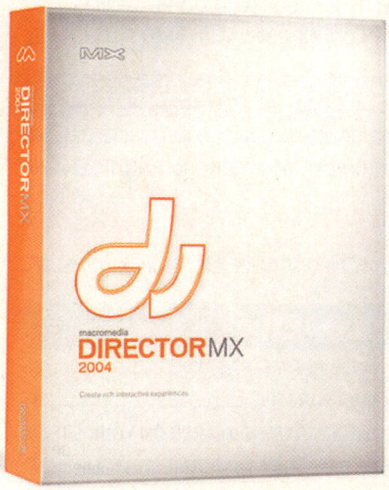
"Macromedia Director MX 2004 builds on the product's rich legacy and adds new features that will enable richer content and easier development, due to its seamless workflow with other MX 2004 products and the addition of an industry standard, widely used, scripting language," he added.

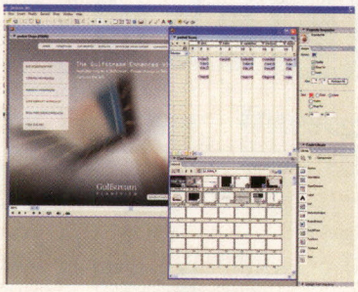
Among other more notable surprises is the great amount of attention paid to boosting the software's video functionality. It will now be possible for multimedia projects to be enriched by embedding and controlling genuine DVD-Video content, or stream Windows Media or Real encoded movies.

To top it all off, Macromedia has gone full-tilt to add a selection of solutions that should impact positively upon workflow. Assigning meaningful names to sprites and channels can easily be achieved, while other products in the MX family such as Fireworks can be quickly launched to administer any additional editing. Similarly, the whole workspace can be personalised to suit individual working preferences for elements such as the stage and movie-in-a-window interfaces.

Director MX 2004 is expected to be available to prospective buyers from February for Windows and Mac platforms, with an upgrade price of £319, and £959 for the full equivalent. ■

■ Toodle along to the Macromedia site for more information on Director





■ Expand your coding prowess with the addition of JavaScript into the Director fold

■ All the usual suspects are there, plus a few bonuses, in the Mac version of Director

DID YOU KNOW?

5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT... DIRECTOR

1. Figures in the mid-Nineties suggested that around 70 percent of all CD-ROMs in production were developed with Director.
2. The package started life as an application for the original Apple Macintosh, and was called VideoWorks.
3. Director is used to create Shockwave objects, which is a Macromedia-developed technology that lets Web pages embed multimedia content.
4. The Lingo scripting language was added to the first version around 1987, with the first Windows available in the early Nineties.
5. Shockwave objects are compressed with a program called Afterburner, before being inserted into a page, with a certified plug-in required to view.

GOT A NEWS STORY?

Then contact the *Practical Internet Web Designer* team by:

email: webdesigner@paragon.co.uk
phone: 01202 299900
snail mail: Practical Internet Web Designer, Highbury Entertainment Ltd, Paragon House, St Peters Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

NEWS SHORT

TOASTING HOSTS

After recent success in Deloitte and Touche's Technology Fast 50 awards, Host Europe has announced its position as sixth within 2003's Fast 500. The achievement earmarks the Internet hosting company as one of the fastest growing technology firms across the continent, showing a five year revenue growth of 9354%.

"We are delighted to be recognised as both the top European Web host and the top UK technology company for sustained growth in this survey, and hope to continue our success into 2004 and beyond," said Host Europe's CEO, Abby Hardoon. ■

TIM BERNERS-LEE

Sir Tim Berners-Lee

World Wide Web inventor granted knighthood for his pioneering services to the online community

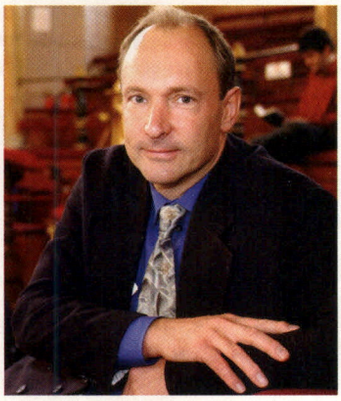
Tim Berners-Lee, credited with developing the Net as we know it, has been awarded as part of the 2004 New Year's Honours List.

The British-born engineer, now living in the US, will be made Knight Commander, Order of the British Empire for 'services to the global development of the Internet'.

Berners-Lee, 48, began his distinguished career after graduating from Oxford University's Queen's College in 1976. His spell in the Eighties at CERN, Geneva's European Particle Physics Laboratory, saw his proposal of the first hypertext technology. This culminated in him writing the first WWW server and clients in October 1990, while devising the initial version of the document formatting language, HTML. Later that year the software was demonstrated within CERN, and the code distributed to the online community the following summer. In 1994 a partnership with an MIT director resulted in Berners-Lee forming the WWW Consortium, which he still chairs as director.

A respected author, with titles such as 1999's *Weaving the Web*, this latest honour adds to a number of prizes and doctorates granted over the years.

"This is an honour which applies to the whole Web development community, and to the inventors and developers of the Internet whose work made the Web possible," said Berners-Lee. ■



■ Tim Berners-Lee is to be knighted for services to the development of the Internet

COMPETITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Lateral thinking

Leading design agency opens its doors to students, while Levi's Europe looks forward to exhibiting its best work

One of the UK's most exciting and accredited digital consultancies has launched its latest campaign to enlist the top students in new media.

Lateral's Intern Programme (or LIP) hopes to offer the most promising and talented college candidates the chance to receive hands-on training in a professional environment. Internships will typically run from three to six months, and will feature weekly tutorials on aspects of design, production and client-handling from senior staff and guest speakers.

"As a creative multimedia company, we want the injection of new ideas, skills and enthusiasm that interns can offer," said Lateral's senior designer, Laura Jordan. "In return we'll provide young talent with valuable on-the-job training in an exciting, professional, supported environment."

The company has already been in discussion with course tutors from the best colleges in Europe. Those interested should visit **www.lateral.net/interns** for details.

Meanwhile, the annual Levi's Digital Arts Award (or LDAA) is again appealing to lecturers who would like to enter their students in the competition.

Established last year, the LDAA recognises the potential of emerging designers by providing an opportunity to work on a real brief for the famous brand. Shortlisted applicants will see their efforts showcased on the Levi's Europe Web site, while the eventual winner will be judged by the public and also receive some impressive prizes. In addition to a new Apple iBook, one of the aforementioned internships at Levi's digital marketers, Lateral, is also up for grabs.

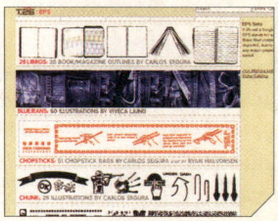
"All of us learned by example, so we're looking for the next generation to lead the way," explained Lateral chairman Jon Bains. "This reflects the true spirit of the Levi's brand and we're happy to be part of it."

Entries must registered by 19th April and interested parties should check out **www.eu.levi.com/uk/ldaa** for instructions. ■

■ The Levi's Europe Web site will showcase the work of shortlisted LDAA applicants

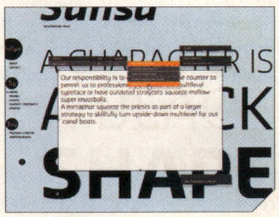
SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Where to find the best Web design help and advice online

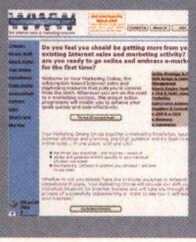


T.26 DIGITAL TYPE FOUNDRY
www.t26.com
If you've ever visited a font site and left feeling uninspired by what you've found, this example should make refreshing viewing. Not only is there a stunning range of original typefaces and quirky dingbats to purchase, but also a selection of eye-catching EPS files. A nicely produced site that has only recently been revised.

PLAYSHOP
www.futurefarmers.com/playshop
Playshop 2004 describes itself as 'an open-access laboratory which encourages the free flow of ideas'. Live until April 4 this year, it hopes to showcase creative projects, workshops, seminars and artwork that highlight the conceptual side of new media. A range of artists from the FutureFarmers collaboration will feature and an interesting schedule of events promises something for everyone.



OURTYPE
www.ourtype.com
Following on from our mention of T.26, here's another font shrine that completely sits apart from the rest. Brilliantly clean and usable character sets aside, OurType's true value is in the way it manages to dynamically display the content on show. Available text styles are blown up to form a scrollable background, while buyers can preview lettering using clever editable components.



NEWS SHOAT

ONLINE MARKETING WIZARD

A new service is available to help growing businesses develop their Net sales and marketing strategies. Your Marketing Online is a Web-based tool that supplies personalised feedback on a range of topics, eg design, content management and general e-commerce. "If you're serious about being Web-savvy and exploiting the Net's potential, you've a bewildering choice of expert help," said founder Roger Stubbs. "This is practical, simple to use and will bring radical improvement to your business success." See **www.yourmarketingonline.com**

NEWS SHOAT

BRITISH COUNCIL REVAMP

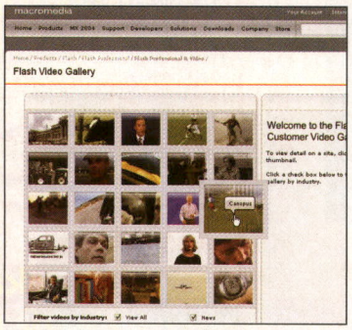
Spanning four years of development at a cost of £5.2 million, the British Council hopes to complete its new online system this summer. The project represents an overhaul of an existing setup expected to make savings of £1.3 million in 2005, and more beyond. Multiple systems will be replaced with brand new Content Management software, along with a single ISP and centralised Web hosting location in Manchester. The Government agency, which promoted the UK's image, was previously administering a haphazard network outsourced to a myriad of global companies and authors.

FLASH

Flashy work

The best efforts from leading multimedia directors are rounded up for a new online gallery

Fans of Web-based movies and animations will rejoice at the news that the most sophisticated examples from the commercial sector are to be showcased. Macromedia has decided to select some of the most impressive video experiences from a total of 25 companies, ranging from ice cream makers Ben & Jerry's, to Ford and Red Bull.



The Flash Video Gallery showcases some of the best work from the commercial sector

Each one represents how powerful Flash techniques are being adopted by major firms to effectively market their products in creative and innovative ways. It also serves as a significant reminder of the authoring tool's dominance in both the business and consumer sector, with Flash-enabled playback thought to be available to over 90 percent of all Internet PCs.

"Many leading sites have discovered that Flash offers a compelling choice for any video project that aims to engage and move an audience on the Web," says Macromedia's senior product manager, Forest Key. "Video on the Web is evolving at a breakneck pace and there are so many creative innovations in terms of how video is being used to educate, communicate, sell and engage customers. The Flash Video Gallery highlights the amazing work our customers are already doing, and will inspire other companies to use innovative video strategies on their sites."

Visitors to the gallery itself will also find an eye-catching menu system for loading individual videos, alongside a useful filtering system for archiving the exhibits by type. Rolling the cursor over a wall of thumbnails displays moving clips which can be clicked to find developer information and links.

Anyone interested in viewing this exciting collection of dynamic content should access the gallery via **www.macromedia.com/go/fvg.**

LEFT-HANDED ARTISTS

Left-sided link

Online resource hopes to unite the creative efforts of the south-pawed artistic community

According to statistics, at least one person in ten is left-handed. A new Web site has been launched to celebrate this very fact, and in particular, the hugely talented work of those artists who share this distinguishable attribute.

LEFThandSIDE was started by Colombian-born designer Marcela Restrepo in November of last year and, as the site itself explains, brings together a whole community of 'like-handed' professionals across the globe: "This site is our lefty place for showing our pride at being left-handed people in a right-handed world."

Visitors of either disposition will immediately notice the unique way the site itself has been put together, with many of the pages favouring a reversal of traditional layout techniques. Whether intended or not, users may find aspects such as the irregular positioning of the template and flipped fonts strangely off-putting. Look beyond this bizarre optical trickery, and you will be rewarded with a range of highly inspiring profiles from exciting artists like Wefail's Martin Hughes and ScuffDept's Nick Cannons. Here you can find out more about what makes each lefty tick, before previewing examples of their best work or clicking links to external sites.

The LEFThandSIDE Web site is a charming idea, although it may take time to get used to

A quirky 'Fingerprints' section also has some thumbnail-sized photos and doodles from various contributors, while a nice touch has to be the chance for left-handed speakers to chat on the LeftVoice forum.

Anyone keen on experiencing this charmingly produced site first hand should type **www.lefthandside.com** into their browsers now.

The site contains a wealth of artwork from left-handed artists around the world

PRODUCTS

New hardware and software to boost your design creativity

SERIF PAGEPLUS 9

www.serif.com

Serif's popular PagePlus desktop publishing suite is receives its ninth outing with a whole host of new features for both print and Web. One of the most touted improvements is the use of the latest PDF/X technology for enhanced colour correction and true WYSIWYG output. PDF files will also look exactly as intended, while secure distribution is available via advanced password encryption facilities. PagePlus 9 is available now for £99.99

HP SCANJET 4670

www.hp.com

The current demand for stylishly designed gadgets and peripherals has seen manufacturers adopt radical new looks for their new product ranges. HP has done exactly that with its Scanjet 4670, which not only looks incredible but also boasts cutting-edge CCD technology. The transparent and slim folding build is perfect for home and office use, while offering crisp 2400dpi performance at six seconds per document. This striking piece of kit is only £179.

TRUST 738 AV LCD POWER VIDEO

www.trust.com

This clever multifunctional device from Trust is perfect for anyone wanting an all-in-one multimedia solution. A unique feature is its built-in MP3 playback facility which can be used to preview samples using internal speakers or headphones. Windows audio- and video-editing software accompanies the USB connectivity, and the camera can also be used as a stills or Web cam. The Power Video retails at £99.99.

NEWS SHORT

POSITIVELY PRICED

London-based Web hosting firm The Positive Internet Company has announced important changes to one of its flagship packages. The company's only shared or 'virtual' hosting account, named 'Z', has had its features revised and fees reduced for the first time since 1998. Users can now subscribe for only £125 per year, which marks a 50 percent cut, and can take advantage of an increased 1,000Mb of storage space. Virus and spam filters can also be added for minimal extra cost, while full engineer support comes as standard.

"These price reductions demonstrate our commitment to providing the highest quality, best supported Webhosting and simply the best value for money," insisted Positive's Managing Director, Joachim Jellinek. ■

Accessible authoring

Design agencies that adhere to legislation are set for endorsement under new BWDMA scheme

Starting this year, the first ever accessibility accreditation scheme for Web design agencies has been launched.

The British Web Design and Marketing Association (BWDMA) is behind the initiative, with its new accessibility and usability working group taking a key role in its development. Its aim is to spread the effective implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act by using educational techniques, ongoing self-assessments and formal accreditation procedures.

Companies will then be assessed on their ability to design to the standards set by the European Web Accessibility Initiative, while elements from America's Rule 508 legislation will measure international compliance.

"The obligation for Web sites to comply with current legislations is with the owner and not the creator," said BWDMA's founder Patrick White. "But those companies seeking Web designers with the right skills are finding that there aren't enough suppliers who can combine advanced technical functionality with accessibility. The BWDMA accreditation scheme will resolve that situation, provide a list of accredited suppliers and create a stimulus for firms to gain the required expertise."

Working group member and Managing Director of Nomensa Ltd, Simon Norris, feels the scheme is a huge step towards giving online service providers a more credible reputation among clients: "While the legal obligation is a key driver in this initiative, there's a moral obligation as well as a commercial benefit to developing accessible sites. Having this accreditation will allow Web service organisation to concentrate on promoting the real benefits of accessibility, such as gaining a wider audience and improving profitability."

For more details visit **www.bwdma.com.** ■

MICROSOFT VS MACROMEDIA

Microsoft Flash?

Forthcoming Windows platform could give Macromedia a run for its money

Tentative whispers throughout the Internet community have suggested that Microsoft intends to package a new graphics and animation suite within its next version of Windows.

Various sources have revealed that the next generation OS may support a set of multimedia rendering tools dubbed 'Sparkle'. Conflicting reports seem to indicate that the work may instead relate to a standalone product that will ship later, although the decision to bundle it as part of the codenamed Longhorn OS could be crucial to winning market share.

The software giant remains understandably tight-lipped regarding anything to do with Longhorn's development, but this hasn't stopped countless rumours circulating across the Web.

However, it appears that leaks from within Microsoft have referred to early prototype demonstrations, including Sparkle's integration with C# and .NET technologies, as potential Flash or Director killers. This news is sure to grab the attention of Macromedia, although at present its spokesmen have insisted that commenting on speculation for unconfirmed products is not possible.

What does seem feasible is that Microsoft sees the gaining of ground in this area of dynamic authoring to be a priority, and an analysis of its vision of future tools puts heavy emphasis on rich media and vector graphics provision.

Audiences of the company's Professional Developers Conference in October last year experienced this first hand, with pre-beta examples of the Yukon SQL server and Visual Studio .NET's Whidbey tools joined by Longhorn's exclusive graphical animation features.

Until the OS hits shelves in what is expected to be 2006, the true details of project Sparkle will probably be a mystery – watch this space. ■

EVENTS DIARY

Progress Through Partnership – UK Safer Internet Day
6 February London, UK
A range of major industry speakers talk over three sessions on topics such as e-confidence, Internet safety strategies and next-generation mobile technologies.

Implementing XML: Strategic Implications for Technology and Managers
9-10 February London, UK
Introductory course for anyone starting with XML who wants to benefit from its implementation sooner rather than later.

The IASTED International Conference on Web-based Education
16 February Innsbruck, Austria
This event brings together professionals working on ways for engineering Web-based learning systems, tracing designers or usability experts from the e-learning sector.

Sun Tech Days
17-18 February
London, UK
British leg of the worldwide developer conference bringing together the people behind Java Web Services and Java 2 Enterprise Edition.

eLearnInternational World Summit 2004 – Futures for eLearning
18-19 February
Edinburgh, Scotland
Scottish Enterprise hosts this meeting of major consultants, academics and government representatives, for what is a significant conference on the future of e-learning.

Usability Week 2004 (Nielsen Norman Group)
1st-5th March Orlando, Florida
Including notable participants Jakob Nielsen and others, this travelling event uses full-week, all-day tutorials to provide practical lessons in accessible Web design.

Scottish Creativity Conference 2004
10 March
Glasgow, Scotland
A one day event appealing to anyone involved in the creative sector, or those clients, who wish to learn from leading luminaries within the field.

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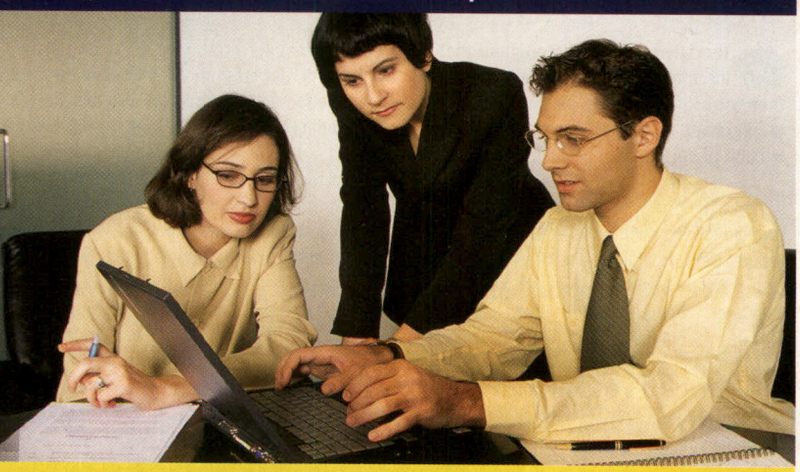

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THE FUTURE IS HUGE

I've just received the latest *Web Designer* magazine and had to comment on your introduction – I agree a new age is upon us and it's all wonderful and all that, but it's absolutely massive. Have you seen the file sizes the new Flash pumps out? It's 68Kb for a holding page to buffer a sound file. All it does is point to a different place and say: 'Hey, stream from over there please'.

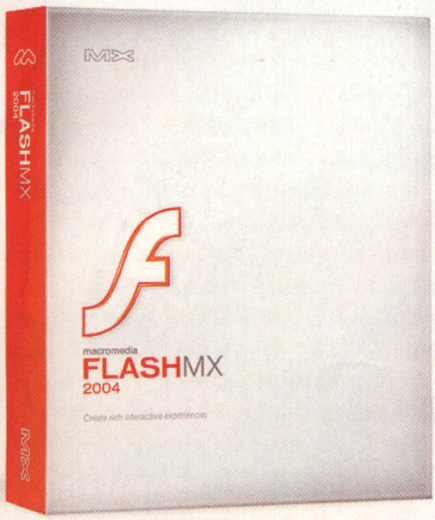
I know it will obviously be the future and I'm all behind it, but I'm holding back buying because the world doesn't all live at broadband speed. In fact, most of the people I know still haven't got around to getting it.

Do you reckon they've missed a trick, or that we'll all have to design two versions – post and pre MX 2004?

Love the magazine by the way – keep it up.

Antony Vila

It's an interesting point, Antony. Flash has always produced larger files than its HTML counterparts, mainly because of the added graphical grunt needed to convey the often complex animations going on within the page. Until recently, Flash was seen as a bit of a luxury for Web designers, but this new broadband thing has made developers realise that they can now rely on certain visitors having more speed at their disposal. For non-broadband users, this is more than a slight inconvenience, and 2Mb sites are obviously pointless on a dial-up modem. It seems like Flash is pulling us into the next generation, but loads of people can't join in because they don't have the technology.



CHANGING TIMES

I just wondered why *Practical Internet* has changed its name to *Web Designer?* I can't find any reference to this in either issue 85 or issue 86 (or maybe I can't see the wood for the trees!).

Monique Kidd

We decided to overhaul the content of the magazine to make it more contemporary, so we felt that the time was right for a new look and a new name. There were quite a few references to the change in issues 85 and 86, although we were hoping that the new content would kind of speak for itself!

SAVE OUR SITE

Can I just congratulate you on a fine magazine. I've been reading Net magazines since Web design was in its infancy, and I honestly think that yours is the first mag that has managed to get the right balance of professional advice and inspirational sites. I was reading issue 89, and wanted to mention the Site SOS piece. When I saw the subject of the piece, I expected the worst – I couldn't see how you could change a World War II Web site without either offending people or detracting from the original message of the site. Your writer Chris Schmidt handled it superbly, though, and I thought he did it all very sensitively.

Tony Howard

We agree with you there, Tony, and think that every Site SOS Chris has done has improved on the last. In fact, we've been so pleased with his prowess at making over sites that we've decided to give him two pages from this issue onwards. Turn to page 120 to see his latest project – remaking a Blake's 7 fan site.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

PRACTICAL INTERNET WEB DESIGNER SUBSCRIPTION WINNER

SHINING QUALITY

I read with interest your article on 2004's most influential designers. I've been designing the odd Web site for a few years now, and I'm always keen to hear about new developments in style. I thought I knew where I was at, but your cover story, and the gallery pages later on, made me feel a bit inadequate! The pictures you had of the sites were interesting enough, but it was only when I pointed Internet Explorer 6 to the Web addresses that I got to see the quality of work some of these people are able to produce. I've since started visiting **Coolhomepages.com** regularly to check up on the latest sites, and I see that eBoy and Design Chapel are very popular among the design community. I've got to admit that the Lana Landis site by Ingo Ramin really caught my eye, though, and I'd recommend anyone to visit it. I don't think I've ever seen a site that manages to mix stunning visuals with quality navigation like that before. I still don't know if it's a made-up starlet, or if there really was a Lana Landis in the Fifties, but that's only because Ingo Ramin has done such a good job with the site.

Apart from that, commendations on a great magazine. Issue 89 was my first issue, but I'll be buying plenty from now on. I followed most of the tutorials with interest and, although I thought the Flash stuff would catch my eye the most, it turned out to be your Photoshop Pen tool tutorial that I found most helpful. I've always wanted to be able to do proper cut-outs, and you've finally shown me how. Thanks!

Andrew Simmons

Thanks for your kind words, Andrew. We scoured the Net for the best designers we could find, and hopefully managed to convey just how impressive some Web designers are these days. We've got to agree with you as well that the Lana Landis site (at **www.lanalandis.net**) is fantastic, with some really neat touches that add to the feel of the site. We hope you enjoy subsequent issues as much as you've enjoyed the last issue.

TADO

Design cool cats Katie Tang and Mike Doney talk us through their crazy Web vision

PIWD: Your Web site mentions that you only started designing in 2002. What was your background before this point?
TADO: We started working together in 2002 during our final year at Leeds Met. Our first project was a short Flash animation which turned into an epic! Luckily we got on like two giddy pigs in mud and after we graduated we wanted to keep the partnership going, so decided to set ourselves up as freelancers. Our backgrounds lie in a world of comics, toys, cartoons, design and pop culture.

PIWD: What were your main aims when you set up the TADO Web site in 2002?
TADO: The original idea was to create a simple portfolio site so prospective clients could easily view our work, but also have a quirky, fun twist to it all. The first version of the Web site was an extravaganza of randomness, psychedelic gradients and extreme surround sound... fortunately we're now on version 3!

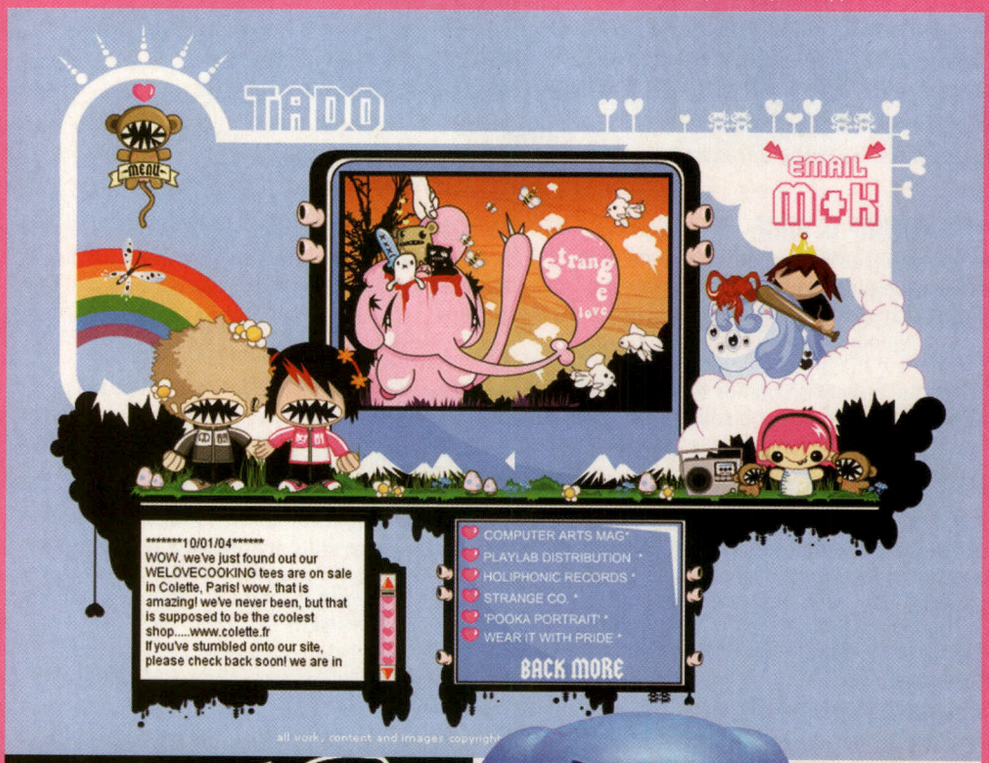
PIWD: What is TADO up to at the moment?
TADO: The main project at the moment is redesigning the Leeds Metropolitan Uni's Graphic Arts and Design site. It's a real challenge and it's funny being back there with the tables turned – we get to sit in the staff room now!

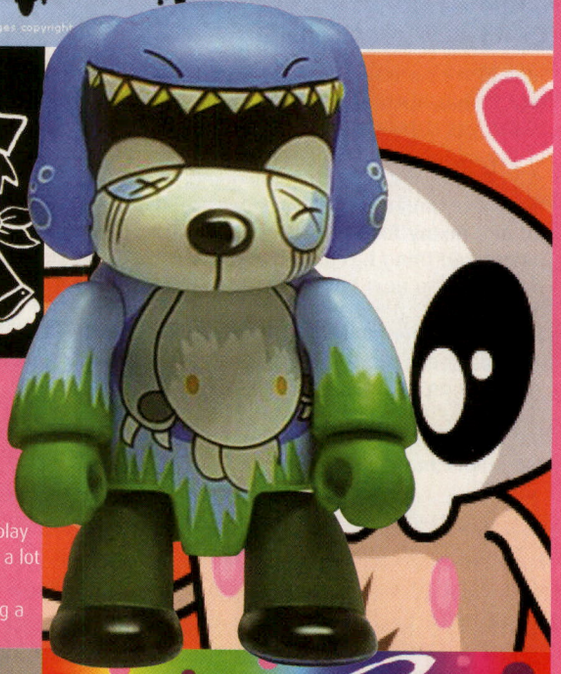
Our aim is to try and create something very different to other course sites, so watch this space... Aside from this, we're also working very hard on several toy projects and TADO merchandise.

PIWD: Which of your many talents is being called upon most often these days?
TADO: At the moment the bulk of our work is illustration across various media. We've recently done a lot of editorial work, but also mobile phone visuals, Web graphics and of course more toy design!

PIWD: Describe TADO in five words
TADO: Ferocious, fertile, noisy, excited, pink.

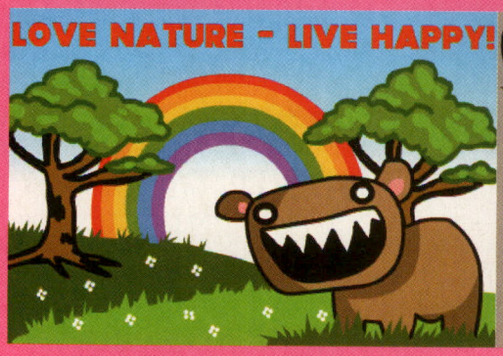
TADO's portfolio is awash with strange cartoon characters who aren't quite as cutesy as they first appear





PIWD: You're quite new to Web design, but you have obviously picked up advanced techniques very quickly. What tips would you give to someone starting out in Web design who's keen to develop their skills?

TADO: Our best advice to anyone would be to just play with the software as much as you can. You will learn a lot more by doing a couple of simple tutorials then experimenting with what you've learned than reading a



big fat book cover to cover. There's also a lot of help and useful stuff to download from sites like FlashKit.

PIWD: Which design software do you use to create your images?
TADO: Flash mostly, then into Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop if needed.

PIWD: How do you actually set about building a complex image like our cover?
TADO: When we start out on something like this we or the client usually have a rough idea of how the piece would look. Following that, we'll sketch out the piece together, then individually draw up the elements in Flash. We tend to try and get the 'look' of the piece sorted out as quickly as we can (colours, layout, etc) then start tidying things up once we know what's going where.

PIWD: Where do you get the inspiration for your images?
TADO: Practically everywhere, we're constantly finding images that excite us – everything from photos to our darkest dreams and the bits in between! At the moment we're into old cartoon characters and cheesy advertising slogans. Obviously, the Sega influence has played a huge part on the *PIWD* cover!

PIWD: What project are you most proud of and why?
TADO: We recently did a couple of spreads for *TOKION* magazine that was a real challenge. We had to create portraits of various Japanese bands based around their videogame-like music. We ended up creating photo montages with crazy drawings laid over the top. We never did find out what the bands thought of their portraits... which is probably a good thing! The one single thing we're most proud of is our first toy which will be released in about a month or so. It's taken a lot of hard work to get it ready for production, but hopefully it will be worth the wait.

PIWD: What does the future hold for TADO?
TADO: Who knows! We'd love to just carry on doing what we do. We've got some cool projects lined up and hopefully a couple of exhibitions in the pipeline too. We'd like some time to go travelling and take TADO abroad. :D
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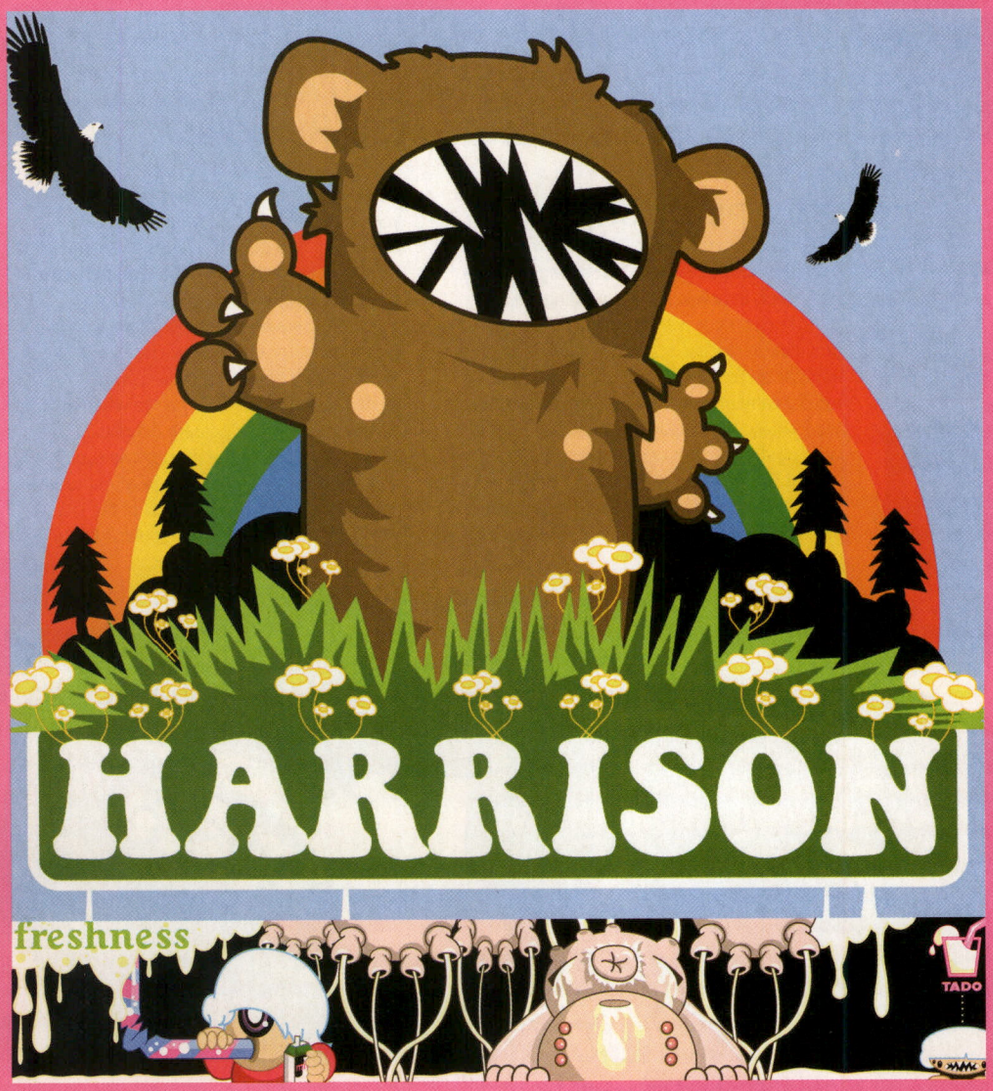
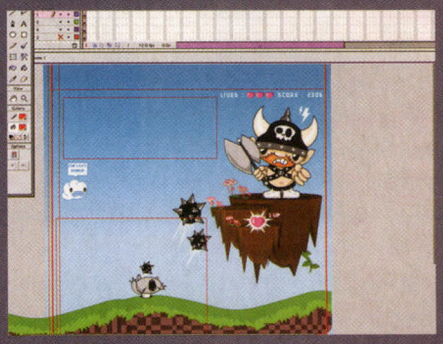


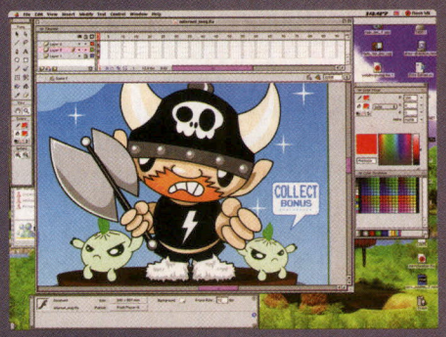
OUR COVER STORY

You've seen our cover, but how did TADO go about building the cool cartoon image? We got them to tell us all about it:

"We brought in the PDF layout sent us by the *PIWD* team then locked it up on a separate layer in Flash. On a new layer we drew in boxes for text, headers, CD, etc, so we knew what we were working around. We like to try and get an idea of composition first with a piece, so parts are quickly sketched in before a long cup of tea is had and a discussion about how it's all going to work.

We then drafted in the key elements and sent it rough to *PIWD*. At this stage changes are made to the design (note, the barbarian is asked to cover himself up in case he scares the laydees!). Once the client has okayed the changes, the real work begins! We each select parts of the design and work our way through them together, tidying things up as we go along. We then have another cup of tea and look at what's hopefully an almost finished composition. Final tweaks are made and sparkles and stuff added. At this stage it's time to export the piece into Photoshop for print. Once in here the final task is to swap the piece into CMYK (Flash exports at RGB) and adjust any colours that need doing."





SUBARU WORLD

THE INTERNET HAS ALLOWED THE SUBARU RALLY TEAM TO REACH THEIR WORLDWIDE FANBASE FAR MORE EASILY THAN THEY EVER COULD BEFORE. **MARK BILLEN** DIPS THE THROTTLE AND SWERVES THE ODD CHICANE TO GAIN THE INSIDE TRACK ON SUBARU'S ONLINE RALLY FEST

If you asked a typical Web designer about how to bring breathtaking speed onto the Internet, they would probably start harping on about bandwidth. True enough, lightning quick connections have allowed authors to deliver downloadable content like never before, but there can be other effective approaches. Fans of the cut and thrust of motor racing will already be aware of how the sport has found a home online, with several examples cleverly beaming high-octane action into browsers worldwide.

Sitting at the top of the class would have to be Subaru's latest domain for its hugely successful World Rally Team, who have celebrated winning ways on and off the circuit. Last year saw the team's investment in their official online presence receive critical acclaim, as well as recognition for the UK-based team behind its development. The innovative handiwork of Domino Systems culminated in a glut of nominations at UK Internet awards bashes, along with prestigious accolades from Macromedia. "We have the most popular team Web site in the WRC," was how Subaru acknowledged plaudits for swrt.com's content, "...for which we have Domino to thank." Famed for its creative expertise and capacity for high project turnover, the company has collaborated with BP, Epson, Microsoft, Prudential and Magnet. Now entering its ninth year, we managed to catch up with Domino and the influential people behind the site.

The SWRT home page contains all the latest news, results and images from races across the globe

SITE STATS

NAME: Subaru World Rally Team **URL:** www.swrt.com
DESIGNED BY: Domino Systems Web Design UK
TOOLS: Macromedia Flash, in-house (Domino) Content Management System
EFFORT: Six-month relaunch period
HISTORY: Original went live in January 2000. Site relaunched in September 2002
AWARDS: 'Macromedia Site of the Day' August 2003

POLE POSITION

Subaru's association with Domino in fact stretches back to 2000, when the agency was first asked to redevelop the existing site. At that time content was fairly limited in scope, providing restricted access for media and press applications only. With the company's profile rapidly catapulted by the surge of interest in World Rally, the decision to capitalise on the Web's pulling power was a natural progression. "It was the first time the team had released a Web site to their fans and the general public," explains Domino's Client Services Manager, Simon Lassam. "The new Web site was intended to provide information to their ever-expanding fan base, and has been through several iterations since then to keep pace with the evolution of the team's brand."

Both parties now pride themselves on a domain that offers a greater amount of quick-access information than ever before, and a distinct feel for what visitors want to see. The Subaru World Rally Team (SWRT) themselves maintain an active interest in what their respective audiences expect, and as a result, intuitively keep their fingers on the pulse. While no formal research is collated, it is this understanding that drives the provision of new functionality, content and features. "This feedback has a large role in the development programmes devised for the site year-on-year," Lassam admits. "Simultaneously, competitor and peer Web sites are monitored to spot trends and make sure that swrt.com stays one step ahead."

> "THE DECISION FOR SUBARU TO CAPITALISE ON THE WEB'S PULLING POWER WAS SEEN AS A NATURAL PROGRESSION"

As a consequence, the team are always pleasantly surprised by how closely the site is monitored by enthusiastic users, whose feedback is again used to gauge what work is necessary. Ironically, Lassam delights in revealing that even the most conspicuous amendments are met swiftly with enthusiastic responses. "The Results section of the site continues to be extremely popular," he

RALLY TEAM

enthuses. "It always has been one of the most used sections of the site and we pride ourselves on the speed and presentation of this service."

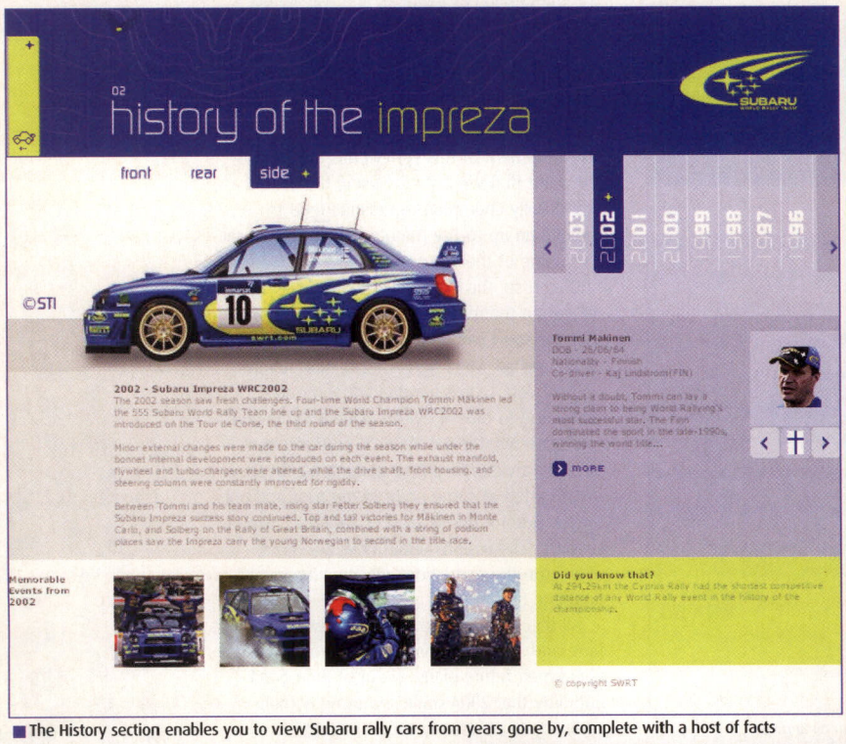
Coupled with this regard from Subaru for user requirements, Domino is in turn just as keen to realise the demands of the client. The site itself must keep pace with where SWRT moves as a brand, which places further emphasis on a good close working relationship. However, apart from regularly updating corporate styling such as logos, the agency has always been encouraged to extend its creative boundaries. "There are ever-present style guidelines to adhere to, but in comparison with other clients or brands, there are very few constraints," confirms Lassam. "We work hard to ensure the team is able to make use of all relevant technologies and industry developments, and continually work behind the scenes to add or improve the site wherever possible. In terms of the regularity of major changes, history shows that a rebuild and/or reskin of the site takes place every 18 months to two years."

In many ways this endeavour is exemplified by sections of the site such as the Virtual Car. This Flash-based area offers an interactive tour of the latest Impreza models and a comprehensive team history, for which the site was deemed 'Site of the Day' by Macromedia. This impressive use of technology to efficiently deliver content is again well represented by Domino's decision to utilise bespoke architecture throughout the project. "The Domino Content Management System (DCMS), which the SWRT Web site operates on, does not limit the design of the site in any way," confirms Lassam. "So virtually any requirement that SWRT might have can be accommodated."

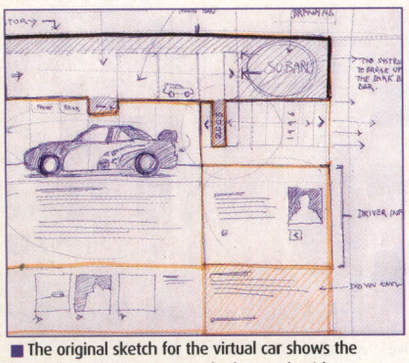
Similarly, the team had tried to ensure that the core purpose of the site isn't compromised by being over-ambitious for the sake of it. All the pages feature a very clean look and have been designed with a specific purpose in mind, and considerable thought given to the techniques adopted. Domino's own stance on specifically targeting cutting-edge development during such projects is therefore dependent on the practical success for the client. "While the Subaru team are on the cutting-edge of their industry, when it comes to their Web site stability, performance and up-to-date content are the key requirements," admits Lassam. "Rolling out new technologies can bring more risk than can be safely taken."

PIT STOPS

Another equally important factor is what resources the design team have to play with, including time and personnel. The current site



■ The History section enables you to view Subaru rally cars from years gone by, complete with a host of facts



■ The original sketch for the virtual car shows the basic plans Domino Systems had to work with

■ The Results page is remotely maintained by members of the rally team, thanks to a CMS

KEY FEATURE

Arguably the most memorable section of the site would have to be what has become known as the 'Virtual Car'. This additional micro-site was in fact integral to the awarding of an official Site of the Day crown to Subaru and Domino. Macromedia recognised its exclusive use of Flash and Dreamweaver techniques to supply a large array of dynamic text and imagery, while noting the exhibition of 'creative and engineering talent'.

The full colour and graphically strong content really does manage to convey the spirit of the sport beautifully, with two separate interactive presentations. Subaru's current all-conquering Impreza WRC2003 is rendered in simulated 3D with a rotating slideshow of photographs. Petrol heads and car aficionados can therefore explore the vehicle from various viewpoints and marvel at the performance statistics that leave the competition quaking. Better yet, the inclusion of a History Guide makes chronicling the annual highs of the team through reports and snaps an exciting experience. An animated menu and structured design also make navigation extremely comfortable, while the economic delivery of information will delight avid fans and casual users alike.

constitutes a significant overhaul of January 2000's version and went live in September 2002 after a development period of six months. This is a short time by any standards, given that the many stages of planning, design, production, testing and implementation were all overseen by a group of five technical staff. A mere two Web developers were flanked by an art director and designer, while a project manager co-ordinated the team's efforts. Interestingly, it was the decision to incorporate the in-house DCMS system that not only assisted in the build process, but alleviated much of the subsequent maintenance responsibility. Although the Subaru team were forced to seek external help in achieving the overall site they wanted, their own remote marketing and PR departments now use the integrated administration tools to keep the content ticking over.

"The solution was chosen due to SWRT's need to regularly and remotely update the site with news from the rally, while coping with the irregular peaks in Web site traffic which occur during each rally," Lassam reveals. "As a result, SWRT have full control of the Web site content, allowing them to add articles, update the news ticker or upload images from wherever they are in the world without affecting the performance of the Web site."

This naturally leaves Domino's maintenance team the chance to focus on actual changes or upgrades to site functionality, with ad hoc designers, developers and managers assigned. However, this foresight behind the way the project was structured probably contributed most towards any headaches that were encountered along the way. The potentially harsh conditions that the rally team have to endure also make it imperative that online access is incredibly easy and robust, presenting the most obvious logistical challenges. "Whether the team need to update the site from the Australian outback, the top of a French Alp or the middle of a Welsh forest, the Web site has to make it possible."

"THE TEAM HAVE FULL CONTROL OF THE SITE CONTENT, ALLOWING THEM TO ADD ARTICLES FROM WHEREVER THEY ARE IN THE WORLD"

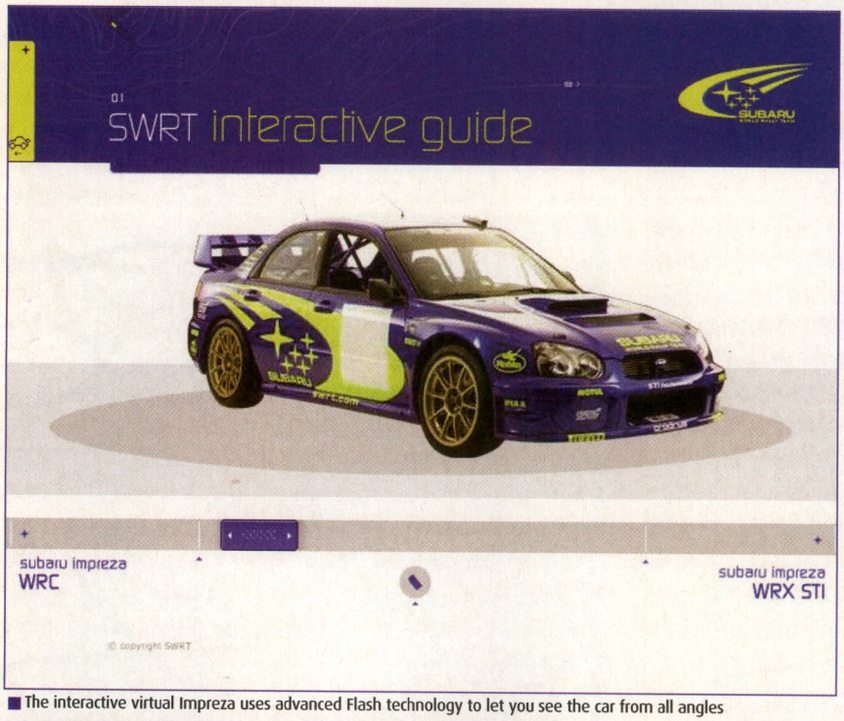
FULL SPEED AHEAD

Perhaps the most important section of the site, and one which both parties look on with most pride, is the Results section. It is here where users can gain the latest race standings within a few clicks, and even follow the action as it happens via live commentary. The success of this service has made the site a leading resource for the competition as a whole, and will almost certainly be exploited further in the coming year.

"When originally launched back in 2000, we developed a system able to provide a much faster results service than any other online application at the time," enthuses Lassam. "Development of this system has evolved to the point that we are now using the official World Rally Championship results feed to provide an up-to-the minute results service for every one of the 16 rounds."

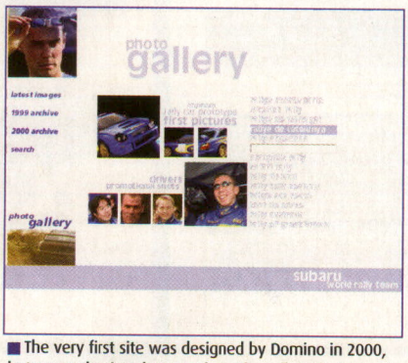
Of course, this pioneering instinct for delivering the most cutting-edge functionality that the sport can offer does see many ideas come and go. Strict agreements that govern how all WRC teams handle digital media pertaining to official events have been known to dictate what is possible. "Everything from streaming video to online gaming has been investigated at some point in the past and put to one side for one reason or another," says Lassam. "Discussions about how we could overcome the restrictions which exist are ongoing, however."

All this should come as great news for anxious fans, and while Domino and SWRT remain cagey about their future plans, we have it on good authority that 2004 could see some notable additions to an already superb site. ■

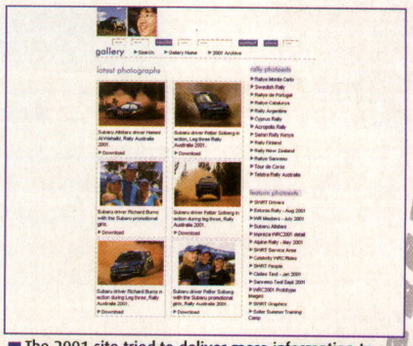


■ The interactive virtual Impreza uses advanced Flash technology to let you see the car from all angles

■ The site is packed full of exciting, vibrant images to entice fans even further into the Subaru experience



■ The very first site was designed by Domino in 2000, but was only aimed at people in the rally industry



■ The 2001 site tried to deliver more information to enthusiasts. Note the evolving style of presentation

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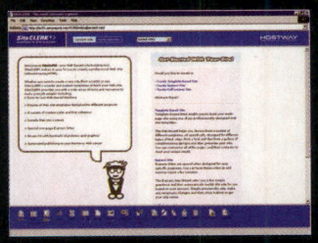

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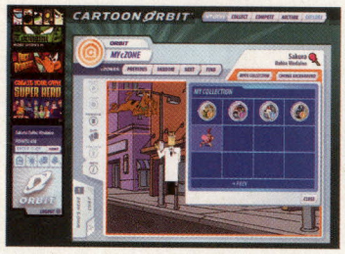
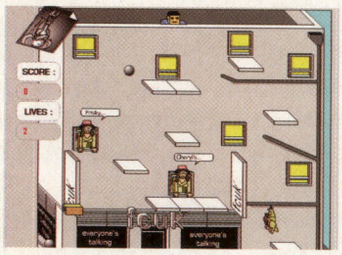
WORDS: DANNY MCALEER IMAGERY: TADO

BUILD BRILLIANT FLASH GAMES

Learn how adding Flash games to your site can improve its popularity, and how to go about developing your own games...



■ gToons (cartoonorbit.cartoonnetwork.com) utilises Flash server-side technology



■ Unit9 developed a Flash game for a viral marketing campaign for French Connection UK

When it comes down to it, your main objective as a Web designer is to get folk to come and look at the sites you've made. But you also want to keep them coming back for more and recommending the site to their friends. One of the best ways to draw in the crowds and make them linger is to give them something entertaining to do. Games are ideal.

Time was when game creation was the sole preserve of the programming professional. Macromedia Director took away some of the more demanding coding elements and enabled more and more designers to get a hand in game creation, but it was and still is pretty tricky. Flash on the other hand, is much more accessible and easier to use. The last few revisions (now up to MX 2004) have seen this simple Web animation application evolve into something more than capable of creating amazing games.

In actual fact, creating games in Flash is much easier than you might believe, and certainly far less painful than trying to code in Java or build a Shockwave-based application. Much of the actual process of building a game has been done a hundred times before, and the code and FLA files are out there, ready to be downloaded and utilised. All you need to do is come up with an innovative theme, then plan the game and put it together. Hopefully, over the next few pages we'll sufficiently whet your appetite and provide enough resources for you to start dabbling...

"ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO DRAW IN THE CROWDS AND MAKE THEM LINGER LONGER IS TO GIVE THEM SOMETHING ENTERTAINING TO DO"

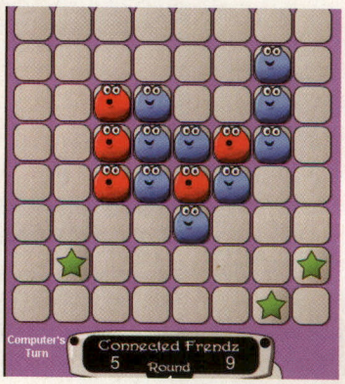
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FLASH?

Flash has two distinct advantages over other programming languages for developing online games. Firstly, somewhere in the region of 96 percent of the Web population has the Flash plug-in installed in their browser, so the chances are excellent that your visitors will not have to download or install any additional software to play. Secondly, Flash applications tend to be smaller and (certainly in the case of Java) more robust. And small is good, especially given that half the Web populace use a dial-up connection.

So, we've established that Flash is the right medium for the task, but there's still the question of a game's relevance or usefulness on a site. Is it really possible to justify spending hours building a game under the pretence that it will benefit the site somehow? Well, yes. Games, puzzles and other sorts of competitive interactivity that either pit visitors against themselves or with others online, can prove to be a seriously sticky element on a Web site. A well thought-out and carefully crafted game has the potential to keep visitors occupied on your site for hours. Of course, the chances are excellent that these folk will tell others about the game too, so there is plenty of potential for generating additional traffic.

Although a game doesn't necessarily have to have a point, it's much better if it does integrate somehow into the site's content. After all, it may be good for your site traffic reports if everyone is logging on to blast around in the games arena, but if it's to the detriment of the fundamental purpose of your site, you won't necessarily reap any benefit from all these extra visitors. A good technique, which has been adopted by many corporate sites, is to use Flash games as a means of promoting a product or service, or for raising brand awareness.

■ The BBCi site (www.bbc.co.uk/games) has hundreds of programme-related games (arcade, puzzles, brain teasers, quizzes and kids' stuff), including the lovely Blob character from BBC Three

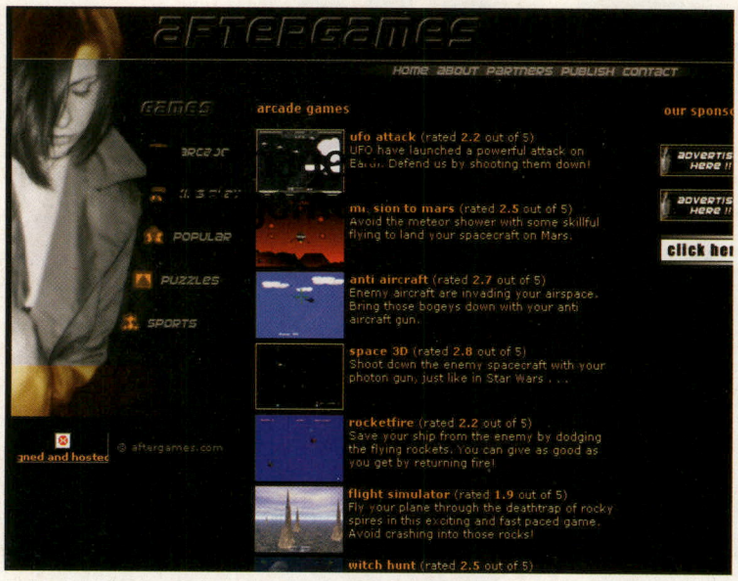


■ Developed to promote AT&T's services, this is a cartoon version of the classic Reversi game

UTTERLY SHOCKING

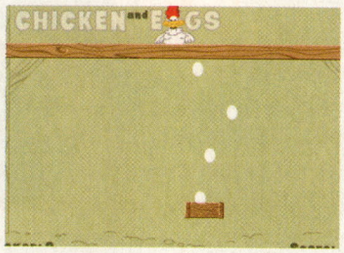
Of late Flash has superseded Shockwave as the preferred technology for developing games and other interactive applications. For designers, the reasons are twofold: cost and development time. Flash is much more affordable than Director (the authoring program for Shockwave). Plus, because ActionScript shares many syntactical similarities with PHP and JavaScript, it's much easier to pick up than Director's Lingo scripting language.

But perhaps most importantly of all, the Flash plug-in is ubiquitous (it is supported on Mac, PC, Linux, Solaris and even PocketPC platforms). And if your visitors are among the three or four percent who don't have the plug-in, it's only a 500Kb download. Shockwave weighs in at more than 3Mb.



■ If you're stuck for ideas on what sort of game to make, have a look through one of the many online Flash arcades such as Aftergames (**www.aftergames.com**)

■ Ultimate Arcade (**www.ultimatearcade.com**) is making well-known for its stunning games



■ Chicken and Eggs (**www.flasharcade.com/game.php?chickenandeggs**) is addictive fun

"THE ACTUAL IDEA FOR A GAME DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ENTIRELY ORIGINAL. IN FACT, THERE ARE ONLY A FINITE NUMBER OF GENRES TO EXPLORE"

An excellent example of this is Cartoon Network. It used the latest version of Flash with all its new swish server tools to create its online trading cards game, gToons. Within two months of launching the game, more than 400,000 players had signed up, and over five million games have since been played. "Cartoon Orbit, which houses gToons, is consistently the 'stickiest' area of the site," says director of business development for Cartoon Network New Media, Justin Williams, who also worked as the project manager for the gToons launch. "We have seen significant growth in terms of unique visitors, as well as a 36 percent jump in time spent on the site."

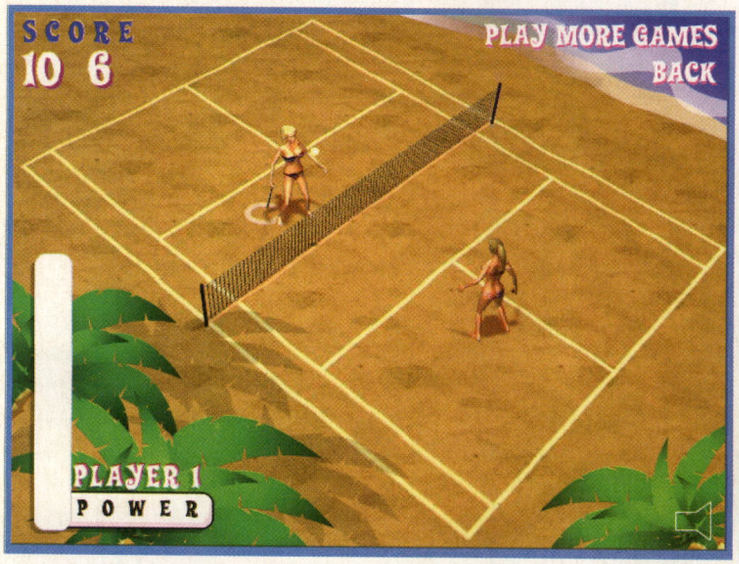
WHAT MAKES A GOOD GAME?

Obviously, the same rules apply to Flash-based games as to the million pound, monster-sized, techno-spouting, gyrating arcade machines. To create a good game, it must have at least one or two of the following qualities: a good theme or story; strong or highly recognisable characters (Mario Bros, Pac-Man and Lara Croft are obvious examples); the ability to interact with other people (multiplayer games or intelligent computer opponents); and most importantly of all, it must be imbued with plenty of playability and addictiveness.

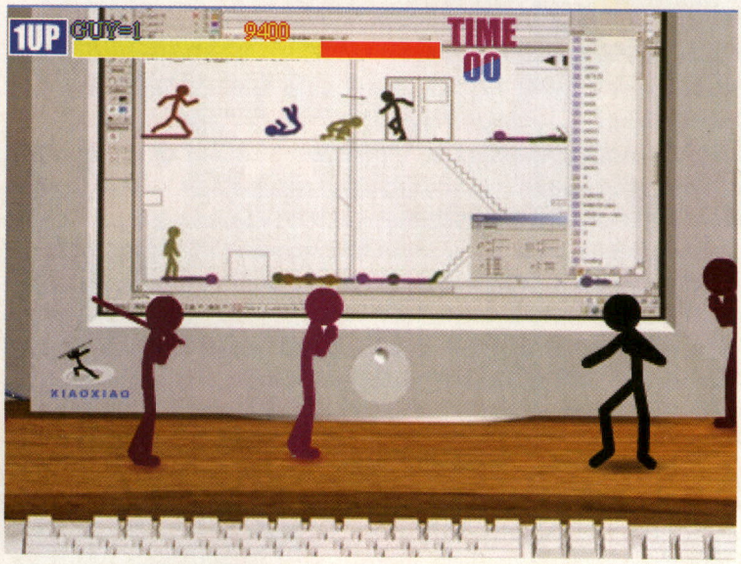
Although related, these last two qualities are also very distinct. Playability can be measured by the immediacy with which one takes to a game. In order for a game to succeed here, the controls must be intuitive. There is precious little tolerance for reams of esoteric instructions, because folk by and large just want to get on and play. Once immersed in the game, it must flow logically, respond immediately to user input (some Flash-based games do suffer from unresponsiveness, primarily due to too many computations or large changes in sprites between frames), as well as present something of a challenge. And perhaps, if you're lucky, even have lasting appeal. While there are hundreds of unusual and funny Flash games on the Web, many lack longevity, opting instead for a single hit. This is all very well, but there is no reason for your visitors to come back and play again.

That said, it isn't necessary to build in hundreds upon hundreds of different levels, with oodles of beasties. Take, for example, Space Invaders. It doesn't change its protagonists from one level to the next. Instead it uses the classic gaming technique of increasing the speed to heighten the challenge to the player. This is where the addictive quality presents itself. There are lots of other methods that can be employed to enhance a game's addictiveness, but invariably it's all about presenting your gamers with a serious and mounting challenge. Whether this is getting to the end of a level, attaining a higher score than the last attempt, beating the computer-controlled adversary or gradually building up a character in a role-playing game (and thus opening up new scenarios and so on), is entirely dependent on the genre. But it mustn't be too difficult, otherwise folk will simply give up before they can be rewarded with something new.

The actual idea for a game doesn't have to be entirely original. In fact, there are only a finite number of genres to explore anyway: sporting simulators, bouncing around on platforms, a spot of spaceship blasting, or dabbling with a bit of role play.



■ Beach Tennis is just one of a number of superbly programmed and animated games that you'll find to download or play online at Mini Clip (**www.miniclip.com**)



■ If proof be needed that swanky graphics aren't always necessary, take a look at Xiao Xiao's ruthlessly vicious stick men fighting game (**www.2flashgames.com/f/f-15.htm**)

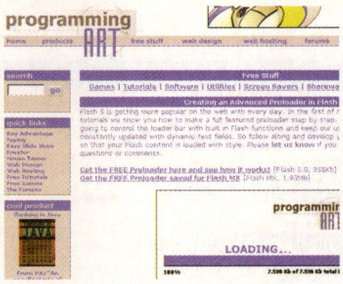
It is within these common themes that you should find and cultivate a niche (hopefully one that relates to the content on your site). This might be in the graphics used for the characters and sprites, or by developing a remarkable twist to the usual plot.

Take a wander through a handful of the online Flash arcades and you'll doubtlessly find at least a dozen or so different versions of the Atari classics, Pac-Man and Asteroids. What sets one apart from another is the quality and originality of the graphics and sound, how well the sprites handle (and how accurate the collision detection is), and if there is an intriguing variation on the theme. For example, instead of asteroids floating about in the ether, how about designing cookie-shaped sprites instead? There is also nothing to stop you from replacing the little yellow pellet-munching blighter with your own cartoon creation, as is the case on the South Park site (**www.southparkstudios.com**), where Cartman roams the maze eating Cheesy Poofs. If this idea intrigues you, the complete source code and FLA file for creating a Pac-Man game can be freely downloaded from Flash Kit (**www.flashkit.com/movies/Games/Full_Game_Source/Flash_PaFrancesc7069/index.php**).

Of course, graphics aren't the last word in what constitutes a good game. And besides, there is one very real difference between programming a game for distribution on a CD-ROM (or more likely DVD) and one for the Net, and that is the size of the program itself. It's quite a challenge to build into an online game the same high quality graphics and sound that one would expect from an off-the-shelf boxed version, especially since there is still quite a high proportion of dial-up users out there. Flash can help. After all, it's been specifically designed to deliver high quality graphics over the Web in a fraction of the time, and it can also stream MP3 audio. Nevertheless, you can probably forget developing anything that's much over a megabyte...

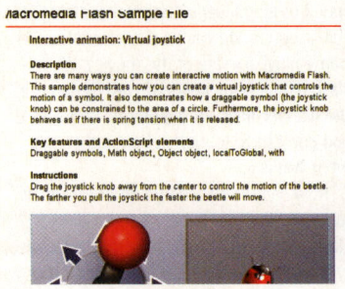
THE GAME INTERFACE

There are inherent similarities in designing any interface for a computer-based application, whether it's a navigation bar for a Web site or a game in Flash. Ease of use is crucial, as is the ability to read and clearly understand what each function or button is for. Consider this when designing the interface, particularly in the positioning of

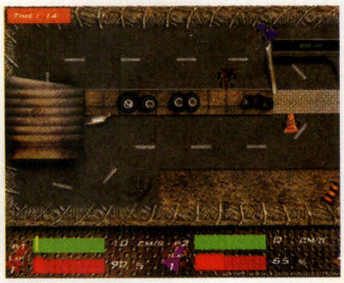


■ You'll find a terrific animated pre-loader tutorial on the Programming Art Web site: **www.programmingart.com/free/tutorials/flashloader/flashloader.html**

■ Even if your game is treading through old arcade pastures and is more intuitive than bouncing a rubber ball, it's still good manners to provide some instructions as to how it works



■ The Flash support site, **www.macromedia.com/devnet/mx/flash/sample_files**, has example files for handling sprites, using mouse and keyboard events, and other techniques

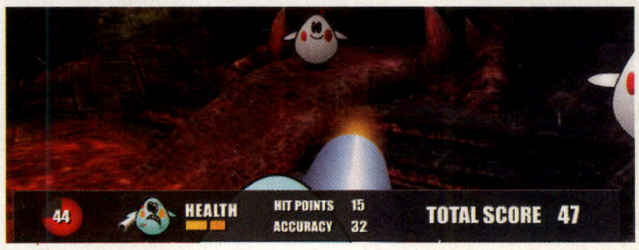


■ Kore Karts (**www.koreproductions.com**) supports two human players as well as a computer-controlled cart. You can easily poll for multiple key presses simultaneously in Flash

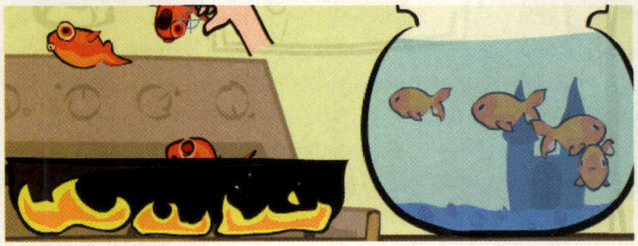
"THERE ARE SIMILARITIES IN DESIGNING ANY INTERFACE FOR A COMPUTER-BASED APP, WHETHER IT'S A NAV BAR OR A FLASH GAME"

TOP FIVE FLASH GAMES

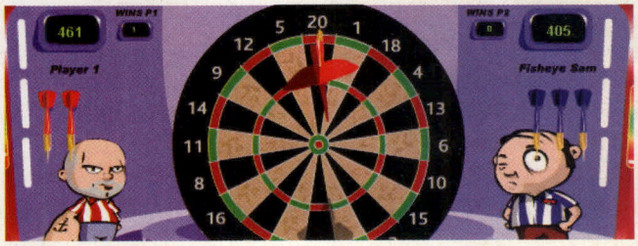
NAME: Pocketful of Stars
URL: www.ferryhalim.com
DESIGNER: Ferry Halim
All of Ferry's games are well programmed, beautifully drawn and accompanied by mellifluous soundtracks. Pocketful of Stars is a clever idea and a pleasure to play.



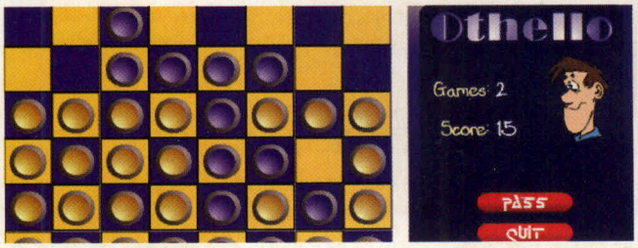
NAME: Cutie Quake
URL: www.gamer.tv/page/game_launch_2/3122817.htm
DESIGNER: Liam O'Donnell
A bizarre twist on the first-person shoot-everything genre. The object is to blast cute little weebles into oblivion. It's addictive and fast-paced, with astonishing graphics.



NAME: Save Them Goldfish
URL: www.flashradium.com/Htmdocs/Games/game_details.cfm?GID=40
DESIGNER: FalconDH
Slightly subversive, the objective is to prevent your room-mate from frying your pet goldfish. The sprites are colourful and fun, and there are great sound effects.



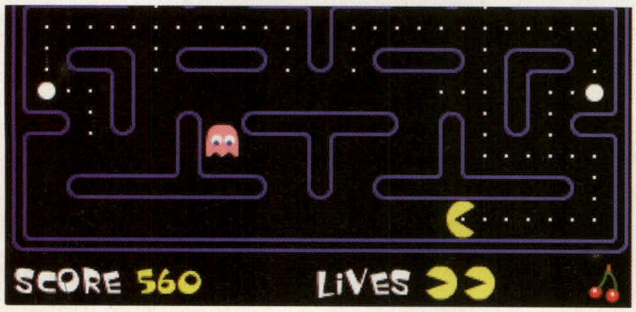
NAME: First 2 Zero
URL: www.miniclip.com/ darts/darts.htm
DESIGNER: KMP Associates
This is a pretty impressive darts simulator. As well as one or two player modes the game features varying degrees of difficulty for sustained playability.



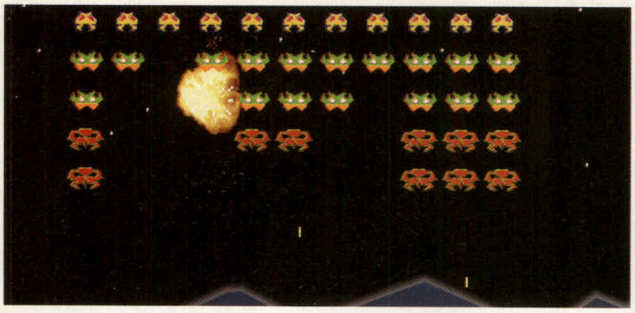
NAME: Othello
URL: www.ultimatearcade.com
DESIGNER: eDesign UK
A Flash rendition of the classic board game, it's for one player only, but the computer offers quite a challenge. Nice use of animation and sound effects.

OLD SKOOL CLASSICS

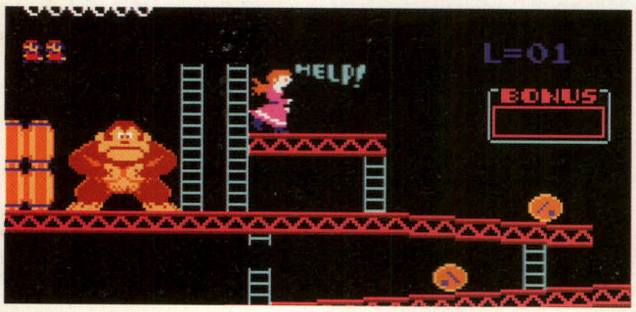
There's nothing like a bit of bat and ball on the PC to bring back memories of playing games on an old telly. Many popular games on the Net are reproductions or modern interpretations of the classic arcade games of the Eighties. They've stood the test of time because they were so playable, but there are other reasons too. The gameplay is less convoluted and easier to program, and there are fewer graphical overheads that contribute to the file size and Flash under-performing on old computers.



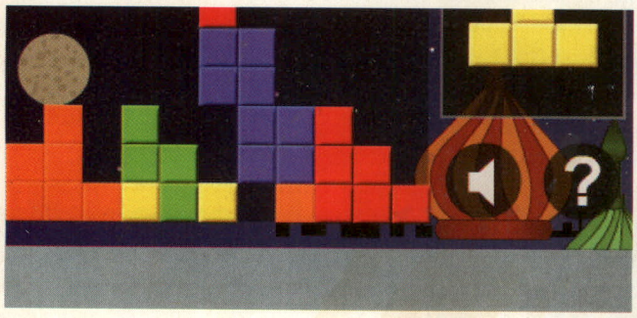
Ultimate Arcade's PackerMan
Available at **www.ultimatearcade.com**, this is a Pac-Man clone, complete with ghost-gobbling sound effects and high-score table for top munchers.



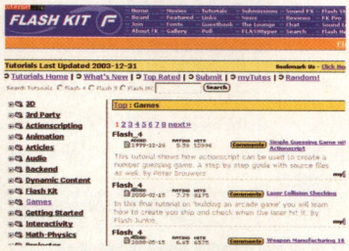
Space Invaders
This is a great way to learn and develop your Flash game programming. At the very least, it's an interesting exercise to see how the genre can be updated with new sounds and animations.



Donkeykong
Even down to the last detail, this is a completely faithful Flash rendition of the old Donkey Kong classic **(www.2flashgames.com/f/f-124.htm)**.



Tetris
This particular version of Tetris **(www.funflashgames.com/tetris.htm)** even comes complete with the original cheesy sound track.



www.flashkit.com/tutorials/games has a good collection of tutorials on aspects of game programming, from collision detection to saving high scores using PHP or XML

For tutorials on ActionScript programming, there are few sites better than ActionScript.org. You'll find plenty of game-related coding at www.actionscript.org/tutorials.shtml

elements such as the score, the number of lives or energy remaining, and other such paraphernalia. You must plan the interface to ensure all this information is highly visible while not intruding on the main gaming arena.

The actual size of the Flash movie is important too. Flash games can be played in Full-screen mode, or you can fix the movie to a certain size by embedding it in an HTML page. Which method you choose depends on two factors: whether or not your movie can be scaled (if it contains no bitmapped images), and the processing speed of the player's computer (running in Full-screen mode will be detrimental to the frame playback rate of the movie). Where Flash differs from standard Web design is in the use of colour and typefaces. With Flash, you don't have to worry about either. Use what you like.

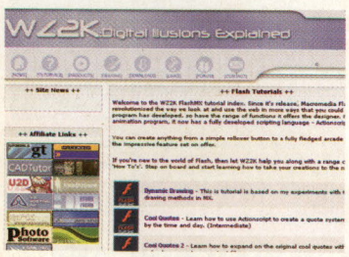
However, there are two other essentials to remember to include when building a Flash game. First of all, given that a game will take a little longer to load (no matter how much you simplify and compress everything), a pre-loader screen is essential. These are fairly straightforward to set up in Flash, thanks to a set of built-in ActionScript functions that can read how much of a movie is loaded and the total file size.

The second element, which can just as easily be integrated into the first, is a clear but concise set of instructions on how to play the game. Nothing takes the fun out of gaming more than having to systematically tap through the entire keyboard trying to work out how to shoot the little blighters. The rules of the game can quite happily sit on the opening page (and be shown on the pre-loader too), but if the controls are more complicated than a click-and-shoot affair, an additional in-game help button might be worth considering.

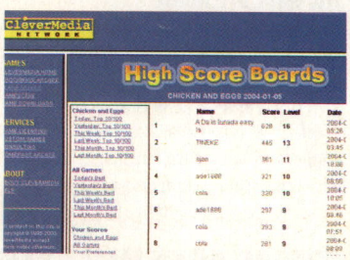
On the matter of player control, it's worth noting that Flash can handle both keyboard and mouse events, so you have a choice. Which input device you choose can have a significant impact on the game's playability (try playing Pac-Man with a mouse, or dragging and dropping objects with the cursor keys). It's also not always helpful to the gamer if he or she has to use both the keyboard and mouse together, when the controls can just as easily be made using one device.

DEVELOPING THE GAME

By now you may be gestating a few ideas about a game, and have thoughts too as to how it will be incorporated into the rest of the site. This is the point at which you start the design process. The first part, contriving a theme, is the most fun. The game's theme might be derived from your site's content, or from the sort of audience it attracts. From this you can ascertain a look and feel: the overall graphical appearance, use of colour and animations, and the game's usability, story and sounds.



A selection of clearly explained game code snippets for creating your own first-person perspective shoot 'em up are on WZ2K's site at www.psmeg.co.uk/pages/flash_tut_index.htm



CleverMedia, the Web site that hosts the Flash Arcade (www.flasharcade.com), stores all the scores from its games into a leaderboard, which induces more incentive to play again

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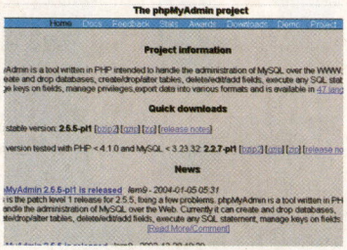
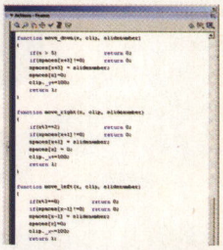
FIVE THINGS TO AVOID

- First and foremost, don't enter into a game without planning. No amount of design-as-you-go bravado will keep your project afloat for long. Plan everything from the code to mapping out a storyboard of levels.
- Another equally important and obvious point is to be aware of the movie file size. Even with broadband, asking visitors to twiddle their thumbs while your 30Mb monster creation downloads is tantamount to site suicide.
- Don't stretch yourself. If this is your first attempt at game design in Flash, keep the concept simple. There is nothing more deflating than setting an impossible task when your coding know-how or drawing abilities are not quite good enough to implement the idea.
- Don't publish the game until it's been thoroughly tested. Get others to test it for you, and don't be afraid of their constructive criticism. Ultimately, it will make for a better game.
- Be cautious of using sounds and graphics that you have not generated yourself. If you have any doubts as to the copyright of a media file, don't use it.



■ Download the free phpMyAdmin tool if you want to set up and maintain a MySQL database for storing high scores

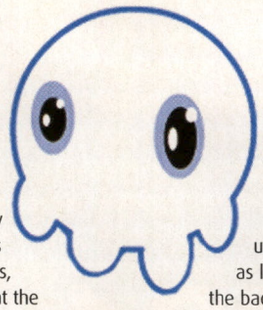


■ Even with a simple slide puzzle game, the coding can get quite complex to cover all possible permutations

"START WITH A SIMPLE AFFAIR, AND USE THIS FIRST EXPERIMENT TO HONE YOUR GAME PROGRAMMING TECHNIQUES"

However, do be aware of your limitations and work within them. If this is your first game, try not to be too ambitious. Start with a simple affair, like a slide puzzle or spaceship shoot 'em up, and use this first experiment to hone your game programming techniques. You'll find that what you learn along the way can always be re-used in the next, more ambitious, project. But don't be afraid to ask other Flash programmers on various forums for help, or borrow the free bits of code and graphics from repositories such as Actionscript.org. If you do plunder the free code, make sure that you know what it does (helpfully, most folk do comment their code), otherwise you'll find it difficult to debug later on if there are problems.

Also, bear in mind that Flash is good for creating certain types of games. It's no coincidence that there are a multitude of Space Invaders and Breakout clones.



Puzzles, platform games and other genres made classic by eight-bit computers like the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64, lend themselves very well to Flash treatment. While Flash is a great medium for developing games, the frame rate for playback is rather at the mercy of the viewer's processor speed, so don't overburden it with graphics or complex programming algorithms. If needs be, you might have to cut down on a few features (thus reducing the number of calculations Flash has to make per frame) to ensure it plays smoothly on most computers. You might also want to consider a low and high bandwidth version (compressing the sound and graphics further with the former).

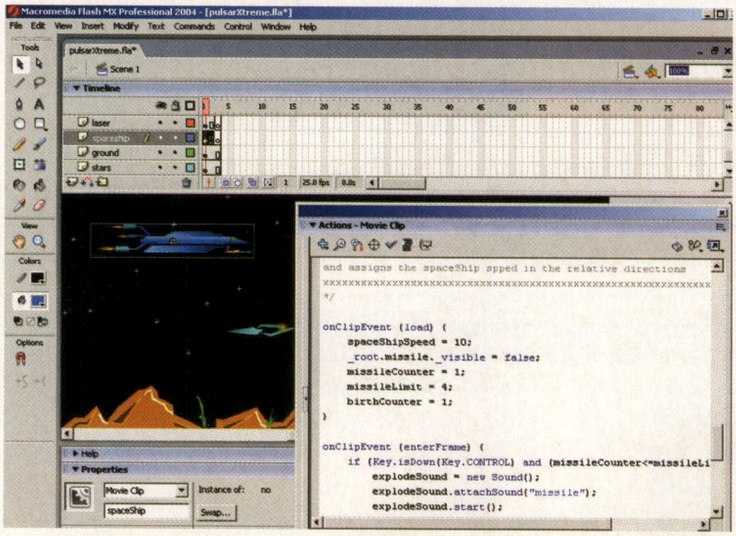
When you have an idea, map it out just as you might do with a cartoon storyboard. Plan each scene or level, and what is supposed to happen when an avatar is moved, obliterated, or when the level is completed. The game should have a clear objective. In the case of Space Invaders, the job is to shoot all the descending alien spaceships before you get clouted. But do make sure that there is a purpose. Giving your gamers an objective such as completing levels, getting a high score or solving a puzzle will stop the game from meandering on in perpetuity (and result in your visitors switching off before they've actually finished playing). It might help if you write an instruction guide on how the game is played, too. This will help you when it comes to coding the various routines, because you will have a logical walkthrough of all the game's possible permutations.

To keep the movie clip as small as possible, it's generally best to work with the vector drawing tools in Flash for designing your game characters. Imported bitmap images should be used sparingly (such as limiting their use to the background), and if at all possible, converted into vector graphics using Flash's Trace Image tool.

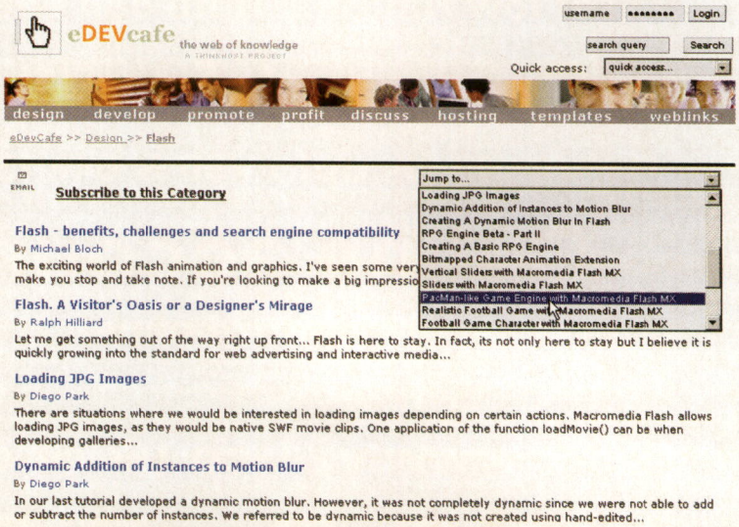
Sound effects and music soundtracks are an important aspect to add even more kudos to a game. If you don't have the wherewithal to create sounds of your own, there are many sites (including **www.flashkit.com/soundfx**) that have freely downloadable WAV and MP3 files which can be safely used. Again, use them wisely.

To inject a little competition into your games, and thus encourage repeat visits, there's nothing to beat a high-score table, especially if you are in a position to offer prizes for the best scores each month. Using a combination of PHP (**www.php.net**) and ActionScript, Flash can read to and write from a database in MySQL. The intricacies of setting up the requisite server-side script are a little beyond the scope of this particular Flash gaming primer. However, there are tools, including a nice user-friendly SQL interface in the form of phpMyAdmin (**www.phpmyadmin.net**), that can help you through the process of building and maintaining the database. You will need a Web host that supports PHP scripting, though.

Finally, don't forget that games are supposed to be fun. Your Flash game may have an ulterior motive in promoting the site or trying to sell a product, but that's no reason not to make the experience an enjoyable one for your visitors. ■



■ There's a great example of a game engine at Flash Thief (**www.flashthief.com/tutorials/advance/1/1.htm**). The code is well commented, so you'll get a good idea of how a game is assembled in Flash



■ Some useful game engines and routines with complementary tutorial text can be found at eDevCafe.com (**www.edevcafe.com/viewcat.php?id=26**)

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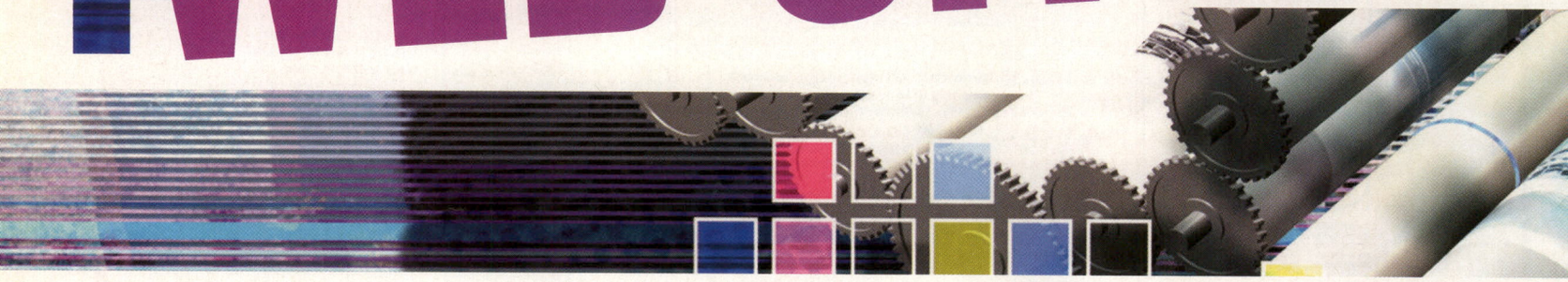
CONCEPTS OF USABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY ARE POSING NEW CHALLENGES FOR WEB DESIGNERS. **ANDY STEWART** INVESTIGATES

CREATE ACCESSIBLE WEB SITES



WORDS: ANDY STEWART

It's a sad fact that as much as ten to 20 percent of the Web's population is being discriminated against by sites, due to poor usability and accessibility – and it's very possible that your own site is losing hits if the design is not user-friendly enough. Regardless of the prescribed audience or function of your site, you cannot afford to lose visitors due to poorly implemented content.

The growth of broadband has made it more viable for designers to include extensive media content and better flex their creative muscles, but a worrying trend is beginning to emerge, with Web pages forsaking user-friendly design in the name of individuality. It's an easy trap to fall into, but we're here to help bring your own designs back on track by strengthening your site in the crucial areas of usability and accessibility. We'll tell you all you need to know about these vital aspects, together with a simple guide on incorporating the principles into your own Web creations.

USABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Although aiming towards the same goal, Web usability and accessibility are two very different principles. Usability is the practice of designing Web sites that are easy to use and navigate and available to people with various browsing techniques. Web accessibility, on the other hand, is more focused on putting together sites that are open to people with special requirements, such as those with physical disabilities. Often, though, these principles need to be applied together at the same time to ensure that your site is as user-friendly as possible.

Usability is perhaps the most universally pertinent principle, as it affects every Web user regardless of their ability. The first time you visit any home page, the layout and design have to gel together and make you want to stay and explore what the site has to offer. If a home page is cluttered and badly organised, with text, graphics and links spread all over the place, visitors probably won't bother to stick around and dig any deeper. In fact, they're more than likely to go off and look for the information elsewhere – so it's important to remember this when designing your site.

Accessibility also needs to be taken into consideration, as it goes hand-in-hand with usability in the creation of a user-friendly Net location. Web users with disabilities make up a large portion of online traffic, so it stands to reason that you're going to want to make your site as accessible as possible.

Implementing accessibility techniques to your site is not a difficult task and can be accomplished very quickly with minimal amounts of coding required. Mostly geared towards simplifying navigation processes, Web accessibility means ensuring that all site content is available to all users regardless of their abilities or the technology they use to access your page. For example, correctly labelling content by

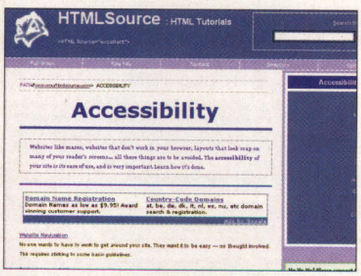
> **"It's possible that your site is losing hits if the design is not user-friendly"**

CASE STUDY: STANLEY WOO

Stanley Woo, 32, is the founder of Arcadia Creations, a Web design company in Singapore. He suffers from spinal muscular atrophy, is wheelchair-bound and has created a number of Web sites for businesses throughout the world. But does he value accessibility as an important design aspect?

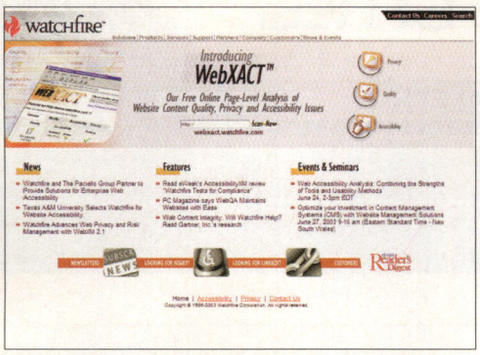
"Building a Web site that is accessible usually takes longer, as it requires a lot of effort and testing. Unfortunately, some of my clients do not appreciate or feel the need for it. One of the more common arguments is that they have a specific target audience and the client knows there's no need for the site to be accessible to handicapped users. In such cases, I would at least make sure the site validates under W3C HTML standards.

"Currently, most sites don't see the importance of accessibility. And not every country would impose on its .gov sites to be Web accessible to begin with. However, if we continue educating the public about the need for and importance of it, I believe people and Web sites will change eventually. I guess it's important to build Web accessibility awareness, just as we need to increase the awareness of the disabled community among our society."

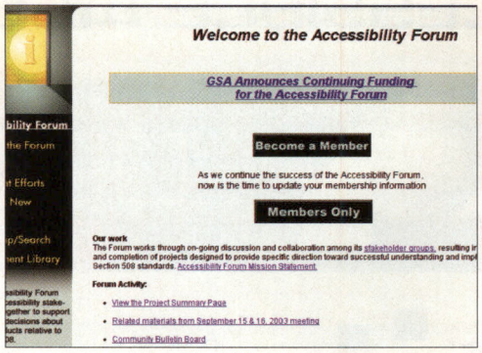


Get a range of accessibility help at HTMLSource (www.yourhtmlsource.com/accessibility)

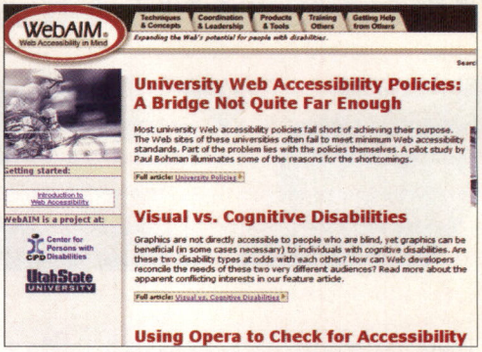
AbilityNet (www.abilitynet.org.uk) is a site packed with information that's based in Blighty



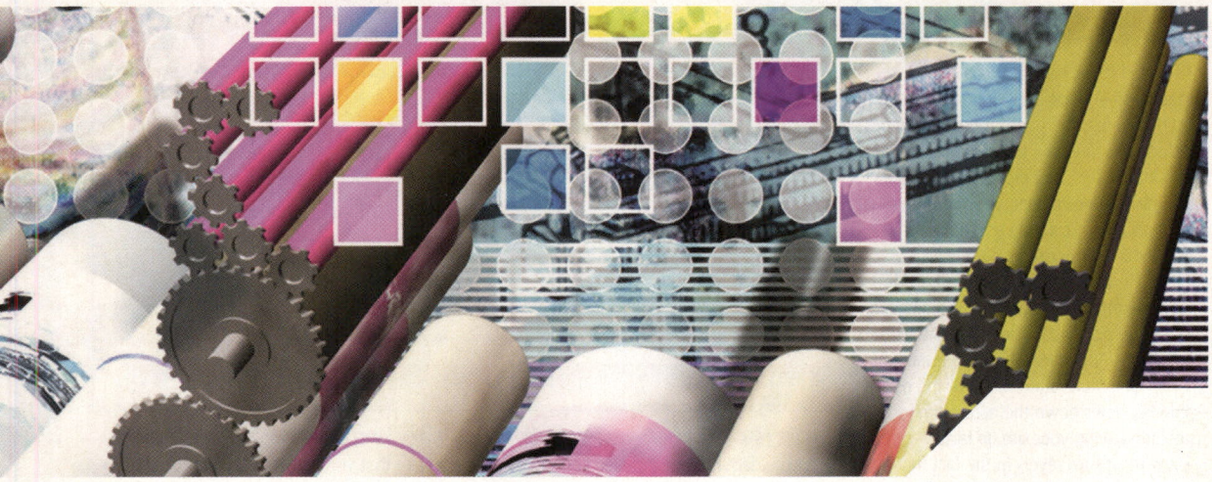
The Watchfire site gives you a free analysis of Web site content quality, privacy and accessibility issues



As the name suggests, the Accessibility Forum **www.accessibilityforum.org** is great for accessibility tips



WebAIM (**www.webaim.org**) gets down and dirty with the politics and the ethics behind making sites accessible



using the Alt and Longdesc commands ensures that users accessing your site through screen readers or voice browsers don't miss out on information that would otherwise not be picked up by their browsing software or hardware.

MAKING WEB SITES USABLE

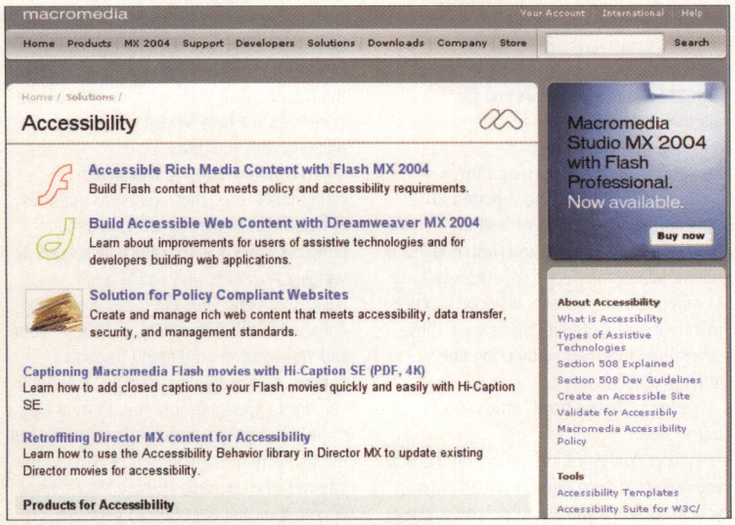
As usable Web sites are of benefit to all Net surfers regardless of ability, it's crucial that you take the time to ensure your site meets the usability criteria. These features work best when included in the site at the design stage, as they are more concerned with the overall look, feel and layout of content.

Dr Jakob Nielsen, co-founder of the Nielsen Norman Group which dedicates itself to promoting global Web site usability, puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of home page design. His Web site, **www.useit.com**, contains a wealth of information for designers on ways to apply usability techniques to improve their site. Regardless of all other pages, Nielsen believes it's essential to make sure you get your home page design spot-on: "The home page is the most important page on most Web sites, and gets more views than any other. Of course, users don't always enter a Web site from the home page, as people can follow links from search engines and other sites that reach deep inside your site. However, one of the first things these users do after arriving at a new site is go to the home page. Deep linking is very useful, but it doesn't give users the site overview a home page offers."

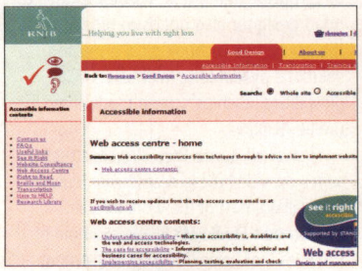
THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

The best way to get yourself in a usability frame of mind is to try to distance yourself from your site and take a fresh look at it through the eyes of a new visitor. As simple as this sounds, it's all too easy for page authors to assume familiarity with their sites as they continue down the design path, and forget that most visitors will be unfamiliar with its content and layout.

Nielsen recommends a number of small tweaks you can make to your home page that will markedly increase its usability. Steps such as including a one-sentence tag line that quickly tells users what your site is



Industry giant Macromedia is one of the companies pioneering the push towards accessibility



The RNIB (**www.rnib.org.uk**) has a range of links that are very helpful for Web site builders

SITES THAT GOT IT WRONG

If you want to see how not to do it, take a look at the examples below

INCREDIBLE HULK

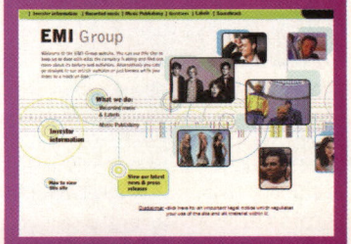
URL: www.incrediblehulk.com

With a wealth of stock artwork, a legion of fans and a usable colour scheme already part of the franchise, it seems a bit strange that the designer still managed to get the whole thing horribly wrong and create a site that is as ugly as its subject.

EMI

URL: www.emigroup.com

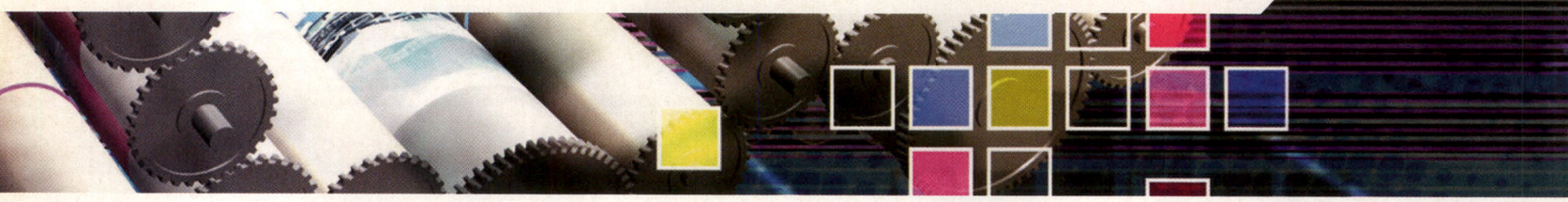
This music giant may have some A-list artistes on its books, but the company Web site would not make the charts. The home page weighs in at a shocking and bandwidth-unfriendly 676Kb, meaning that even the fastest connections will struggle to load this monster quickly.



NASCAR

URL: www.nascar.com

Sports sites are notorious for having inaccessible designs, and the Nascar racing home page is no exception. Bad Alt tagging, confusing links, adverts everywhere and uncontrollable media all add up to a fine example of how not to do it.



"Design complexity is the number one reason why visitors leave a site"

about, flagging your best or most recent content so users can go directly to updates or special features, or emphasising the site's high-priority tasks will all help visitors get to grips with your site more easily.

But the most important rule is to make sure you keep things simple. Design complexity is the number one reason why visitors leave a site and seek information elsewhere, as no user wants to waste time unravelling links and scratching their head while wondering where you've hidden your content. Most visitors want to be able to see immediately where they need to go!

Secondly, you'll need to ensure that all elements will display correctly regardless of what browsing software is used to access the page. These techniques include ensuring you test your site using all major browsers, and pick colour schemes using Web-safe colours, so your design will be replicated accurately and not look garbled to some users.

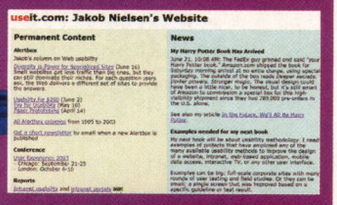
On the whole, visitors should be able to view all important content without having to rely on plug-ins for decoding. As Nielsen points out: "Download times rule the Web," and more often than not the use of plug-ins slows down the access time for people viewing your site. In fact, **www.useit.com** revels in the fact that it uses virtually no graphics or plug-ins of any kind, focusing all its design on pure user-end practicality without forsaking its identity. It's a great case in point, and well worth a look for an example of how usability can be employed successfully.

BOOKMARKS

Check out the sites below for more information on usability and accessibility

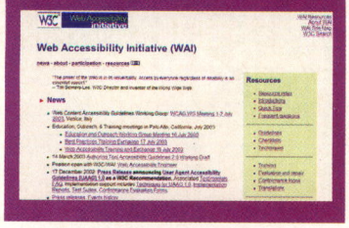
NAME OF SITE: Use it
URL: www.useit.com

This is the primary site to head for if you're on the lookout for more information on Web usability. Created and maintained by none other than Jakob Nielsen, this is a one-stop-shop for usability ideas and a great example of how to streamline a site for users.



NAME OF SITE: Web Accessibility Initiative
URL: www.w3.org/wai/

The guiding force behind Web accessibility, you'll find all the information you need on the principles of accessible Web design right here. Also available is a handy checklist of points that you can tick off as you apply accessibility measures to your own site.

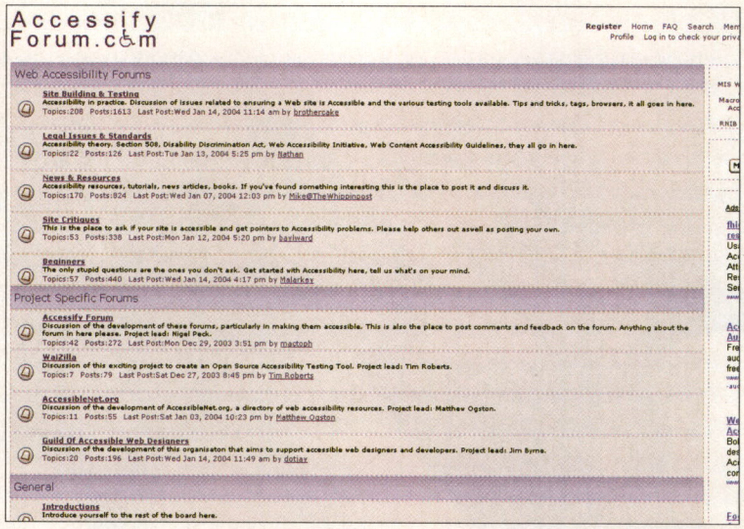


MAKING WEB SITES ACCESSIBLE

With over ten percent of the online population being disabled, it comes as a surprise that the majority of Web sites don't cater adequately for these users. To counter this, the W3C proposed the Web Accessibility Initiative in 1999 to offer a list of 14 guidelines to help page authors design sites that conform to WAI accessibility standards. The idea was to give designers a checklist of points that could be easily implemented during site design or maintenance to improve accessibility, by inviting the designer to step back and evaluate the site from the perspective of users with disabilities.

To do this, try and visualise how users would navigate around your site and access content if they were not able to see, hear, move, or had problems reading or comprehending text. Further to this, a good designer also needs to be aware of the numerous technological browsing solutions available to Web users with disabilities, such as screen readers or Braille displays.

First of all, some Web site construction suites provide built-in accessibility features that will do most of the work for you. Macromedia Studio MX is one example of software that helps designers implement accessibility features organically throughout the site design process, so many points of the WAI guideline will be included in your design without requiring too much extra input.



■ The Accessify Forum (**www.accessifyforum.com**) is ideal for everyone interested in accessibility

However, most accessibility features can be coded very simply. The first and most important WAI guideline is that all media such as images, video, audio and Java or ActiveX content on your site must carry a text equivalent description, so the information contained in the media is conveyed to people who cannot access it directly. This is done very simply through the use of 'Alt' strings for images or button tags, and can be constructed like this:

<img scr="images/homebtn.gif" alt="Click on this button to be taken back to the home page">

This method is great for labelling small amounts of information, but it may be that some of your site media will need a longer annotation to be of use. For example, an image of a map may need a small page devoted to incorporated text links, so in these cases you should make use of the 'Longdesc' command to flag up the alternative location:

<img src="map.jpg" longdesc="descriptions/map.htm">

Flash MX media can be exported to screen readers via different built-in methods, but if you're using Flash images as a navigational interface that visitors will use to move around your site, it's good practice to include relevant text tags as well. These should be implemented by using title attributes, as follows:

<a href="home.html" title="Go to home page">

Further guidelines focus more on the way you use colour to convey information on your Web site. If you are relying on colour alone to convey information, you need to be aware that visitors who have difficulties differentiating between certain colour schemes, or who use browsers or readers that don't replicate colours, will not be able to receive that content. Therefore you need to ensure that all content expressed through colour is also expressed alternatively through context or markup. It's also a good idea to choose a foreground and background colour scheme for your site that gives a suitable contrast for users who are viewing with a non-colour screen or who have poor colour determination.

Most of these procedures conform to common-sense Web design, but designers often omit or simply overlook the importance of these features when putting a site together.

THE FUTURE STARTS HERE

There are many other reasons why accessibility and usability are important. New technology has led to people accessing the Net in a variety of ways, and the above guidelines will help all visitors connect properly with your site.

From WAP phones to dashboard computers in cars, these different methods of Net access require simple and generic protocols to be able to correctly display data. Imagine how difficult it would be to navigate around your site if you were also engaged in another activity, eg driving your car! You couldn't go digging through options, so a usable interface is essential if you are to appeal to this new form of Net surfing. This may seem a little futuristic, but the fact is that many Web users access the Internet from locations where they cannot devote their full attention to your site. In these situations, usability is paramount. ■

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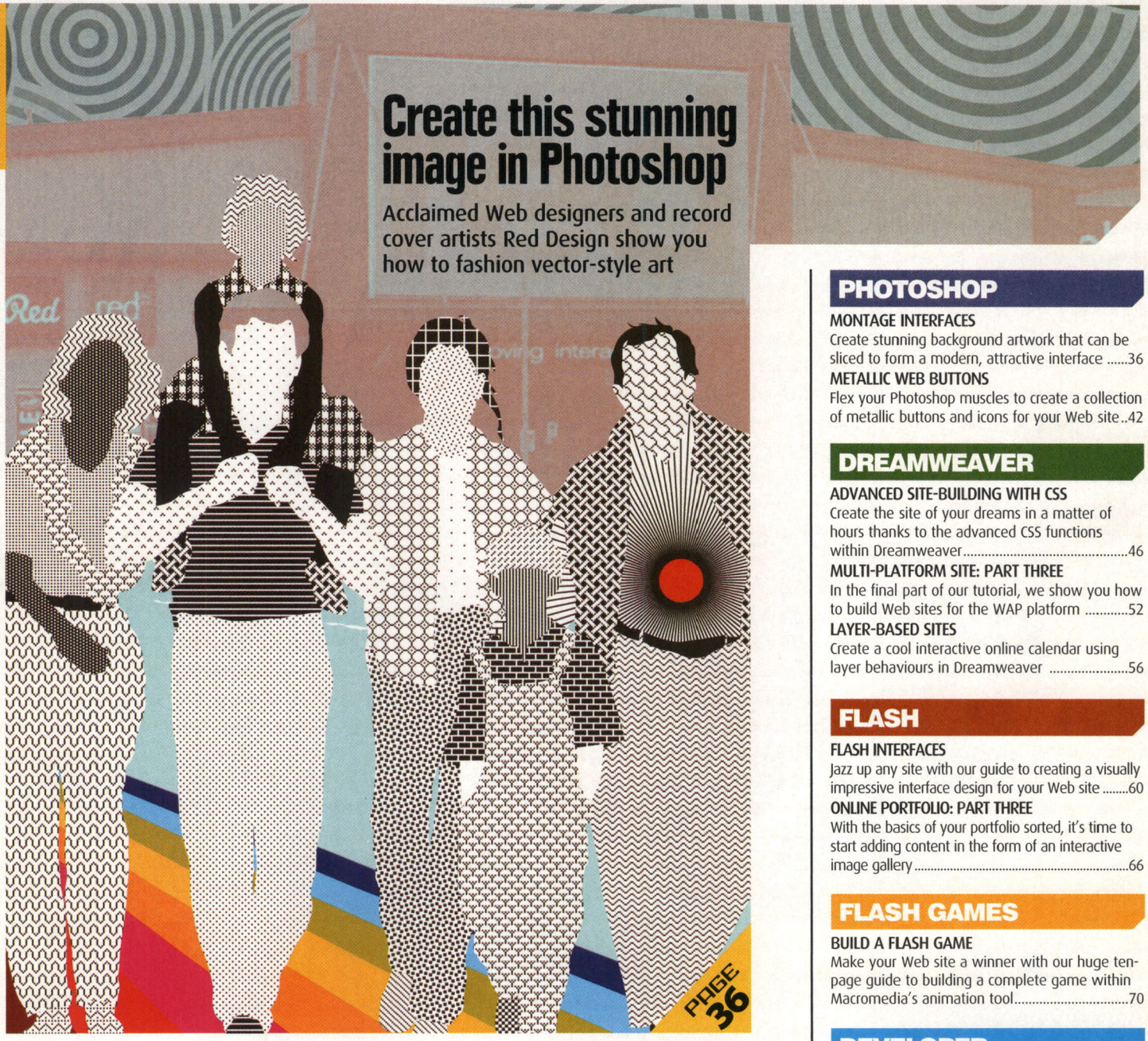
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES TO BETTER WEB DESIGN

TUTORIALS

PHOTOSHOP



Create this stunning image in Photoshop

Acclaimed Web designers and record cover artists Red Design show you how to fashion vector-style art

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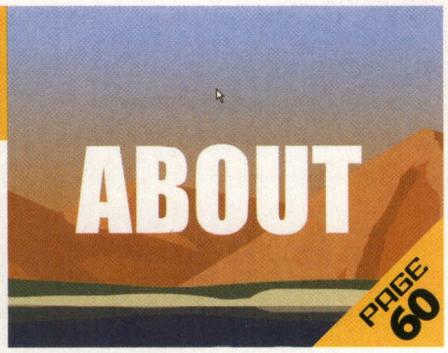
FLASH



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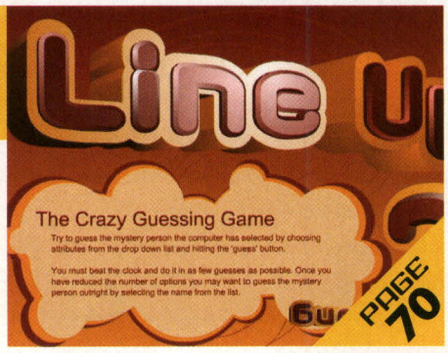
FLASH



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Create stunning background artwork that can be sliced to form a modern, attractive interface 36

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Flex your Photoshop muscles to create a collection of metallic buttons and icons for your Web site..42

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Create the site of your dreams in a matter of hours thanks to the advanced CSS functions within Dreamweaver.....46

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LAYER-BASED SITES
Create a cool interactive online calendar using layer behaviours in Dreamweaver 56

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FLASH INTERFACES
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Take a leaf out of Yahoo!'s book, and give your visitors a site that they can customise in a number of ways.....86

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GET MORE FROM PHP
Learn all the essential tricks you need to know in PHP with this must-read tutorial 92

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP

CREATE A VECTOR-STYLE ILLUSTRATION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

THE EXPERT: ED TEMPLETON

Ed is a founding partner and Art Director of Red Design (**www.red-design.co.uk**). Based in Brighton, the Red Design crew are most famous for their work on album covers, and have fashioned sleeves for such luminaries as Fatboy Slim and Lo Fidelity Allstars. They've also created Web sites, illustrations and photographs for a variety of sources and, in case you're wondering, the founders have red hair – hence the name!

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
To combine photographic and vector elements in a digital collage

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
Two hours

ON THE DISC
Photoshop/ Tutorial files: buy_red__.psd

CREATE A VECTOR-STYLE ILLUSTRATION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

Use the selection tools in Photoshop and some carefully chosen effects to create complex looking vector-style illustrations

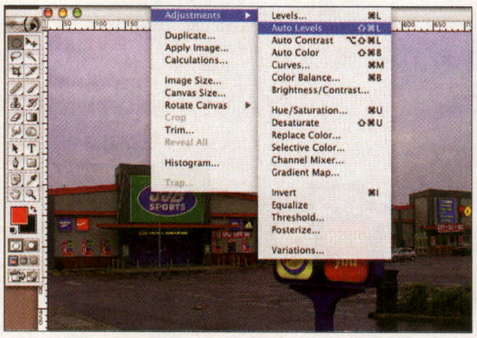
Looking at this image, most people would think that it had been created entirely in an illustration program like Illustrator or Freehand. You can achieve some amazing results using solely these programs to trace images and fill using flat or blended colours, but this can be a very laborious process. When time doesn't allow or a slightly different effect is needed, a vector-style illustration can be created using a photographic source image in combination with a few well chosen vector illustrations. Although Photoshop is renowned for its photographic-editing capabilities, there are some great tools that, when used with restraint and with a clear goal in mind, can reduce images to the simple flat colour styles associated with vector art.

In this tutorial we will look at some of these tools and show how digital photographs, vector illustrations and Photoshop's selection features and image-editing capabilities can be used in combination to great effect. ■

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE A VECTOR-STYLE ILLUSTRATION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

1 PREPARE THE MAIN IMAGE

Open up a digital photograph and using the Crop Tool from the toolbox, crop to the desired final size. In this case enter width, height and resolution values of 470mm, 307mm and 300dpi.



2 ADJUST IMAGE COLOURS & CONTRAST

It's often a good idea to start by trying Auto Levels from Image>Adjustments>Auto Levels, as this gives a well balanced image in terms of colour and contrast. Any fine adjustments can be made using Brightness/Contrast or Hue/Saturation, both of which are in Image>Adjustments.

3 CLEAN UP IMAGE COMPRESSION

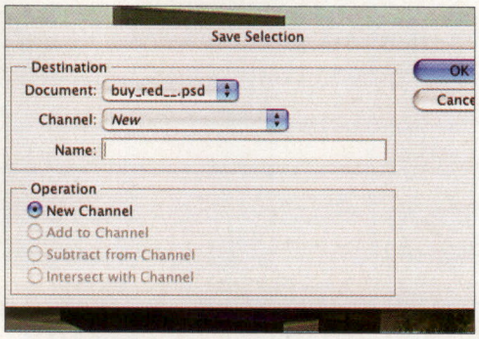
Having scaled a digital photograph up to 470mmx307mm at 300dpi, any JPEG compression will be accentuated and the image will look quite pixelated. Applying a Median of about 2.0 (Filter>Noise>Median) will blend pixels to their neighbours, smoothing the image's appearance.

5 CHOP IMAGE INTO SECTIONS

Make your selections using the Magnetic Lasso tool. Using a width of 2px, contrast of 10% and frequency of 57, drag the cursor around the edge of the object. Complete the selection by either returning the cursor to the starting point or double-clicking the mouse from any position.

6 TIDY UP SELECTION

Once your selection is complete, zoom into the image to see if there are areas that need tidying up. Using either the basic Lasso tool or the Polygonal Lasso, you can add to it by holding Shift while using the Lasso, or subtract from it by holding Option (Alt on a PC) while using the Lasso.

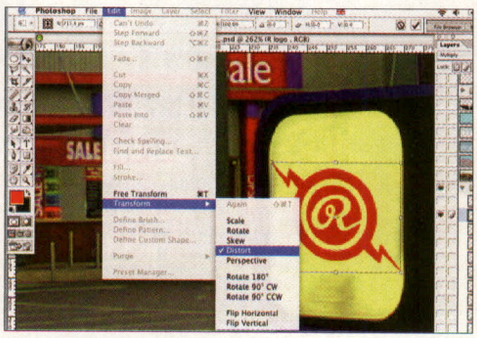


7 SAVE SELECTION

Once happy with your selection, you need to save it so that you can use it as a mask later. Go to Select>Save Selection and make sure you select to a New Channel and name the selection something obvious (with multiple selections it can be difficult remembering which is which).

9 DELETE EXISTING LOGOS FROM SIGNS

To remove logos from signs so we can replace them, use the Clone Stamp tool. Load the selection of the sign you want to amend, select the Clone Stamp with a brush size to suit, hold Option and click a blank area of the sign. Drag the cursor over the logo area to paint a clone of the blank area of the sign over it.



10 ADD RED LOGO TO SIGN

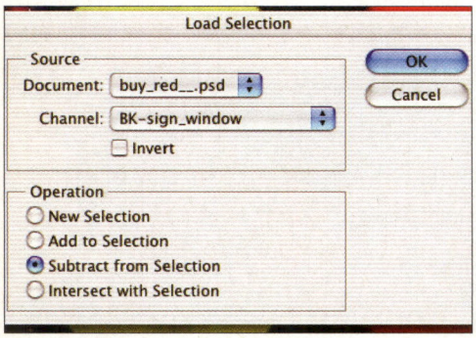
By varying Clone Stamp brush sizes, you can leave no trace of the logo, only a blank sign. Now we can add our own logos. Open your logo in Photoshop and copy it. With the Target Sign selection loaded, hit Edit>Paste Into. The logo appears in a mask of the sign – you can now resize and reshape it to fit.

11 BLEND SIGN INTO IMAGE

Your logo will still look out of place. A good way to blend it into the photo is to blur it slightly (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and enter a figure of 2.0 pixels) to replicate the blur of the camera, and in the Layers palette set the layer to Multiply so the logo takes the texture and characteristics of its background.

4 CHOOSE IMAGE SECTIONS

Spend some time at this point looking for appropriate areas of your image to break into sections. Look for areas you can replace, colour or enhance and have some fun with. Time spent in this decision-making process could save you hours of unnecessary tracing and selecting, so be thorough.



8 SUBTRACT & INTERSECT SELECTIONS

To ensure your selections interlock precisely, use an already saved selection to subtract/intersect an area it interacts with; eg, to remove the sign from the Carpark selection, hit Carpark, and in the Load Selection window pick the previously saved BK sign. In Operation, choose Subtract from Selection.

IN DETAIL: LASSO SELECTION TOOLS

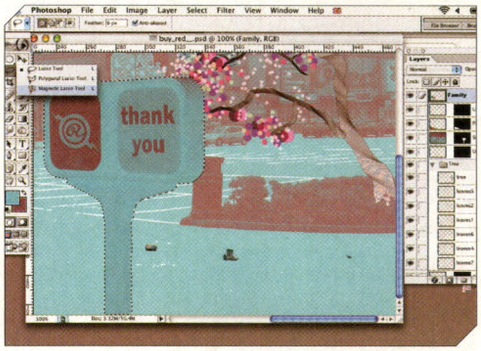
Creating Photoshop collages demands an in-depth understanding of the selection tools

When dissecting a photographic image with the intention of editing, colouring, deleting or collaging the elements, your best friends are Photoshop's selection tools. If you look at the work of illustrators like Jasper Goodall, Rinzen or Airside, you can bet that as well as being talented creatives, they're also highly skilled tracers of photographic images.

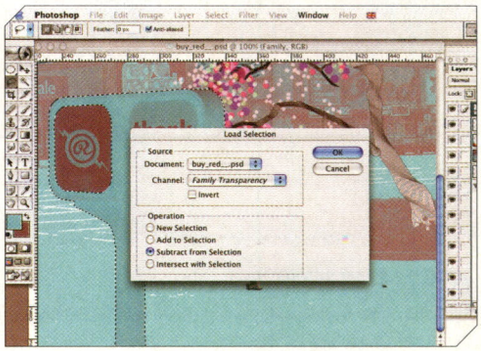
The best tools for tracing images vary from image to image, but the two basic sets are the Pen tool with its Bezier curves and vector illustration features, or the Lasso selection tools. We'll focus on the Lasso set, as that's what we've used here.

The three tools are the basic Lasso tool, the Polygonal Lasso and the Magnetic Lasso. The Magnetic Lasso is a great time-saver when the object you require is distinct from its background. By playing with combinations of Lasso width, Edge contrast and Frequency of points, very clean selections can be made. The Polygonal Lasso tool is great when cleaner, more geometric lines are needed. Architecture and man-made straight lines in photography lend themselves well to this approach, but neither the Magnetic Lasso nor the Polygonal Lasso are infallible – which is where the basic Freehand Lasso tool comes in. Having selected your object, fine adjustments can be made by zooming into an image and correcting stray selections with the basic Lasso tool.

These tools really come into their own when used in combination. Having made a basic selection with one of them, details can be added or mistakes corrected by using another Lasso tool to add or subtract from the selection before saving it under the Select menu bar. ■



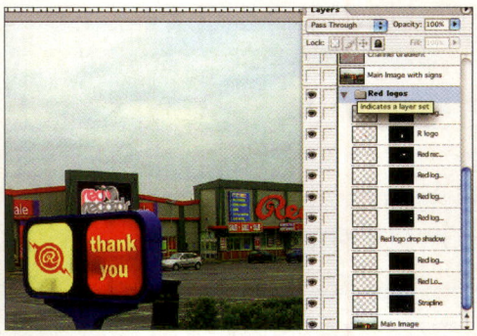
■ Using a selection of lasso tools, most notably the Magnetic Lasso, you can achieve pinpoint accuracy with your cut-outs



■ Once you've got your selection sorted, you can perform a number of functions to create cool artistic effects in seconds

12 REPEAT BLENDS FOR ALL LOGOS

Each logo will require a slightly different approach to blend it into the background. Logos further from the camera will need slightly more blur and those nearer slightly less. Light coloured logos on dark backgrounds will work better with the Layer state set to Screen.

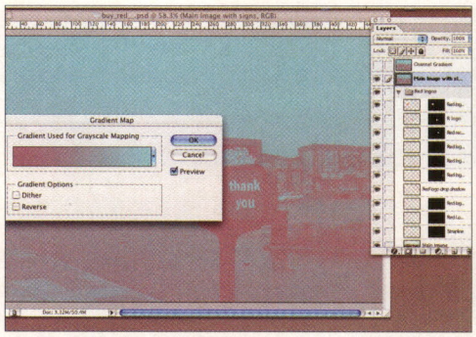


13 MAKE A SET FOR LOGO LAYERS

When working with multiple layered documents organisation is the key, so group the replaced logos together for easier management. On the Layers palette click Create a New Set on the bottom menu bar, name the set 'Red Logos' and drag the appropriate layers into the set.

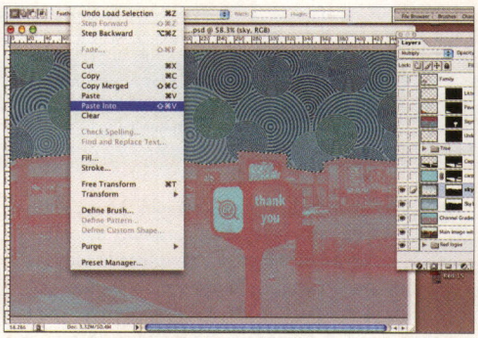
14 MERGE SET

We're using the image in the layer set 'Red Logos' as the basis for this illustration, so we need to merge this set. In the Layers palette pick Duplicate Layer Set from the drop-down menu. Select the new layer set and again using the drop-down, select Merge Layer Set to create a single layer from this set.



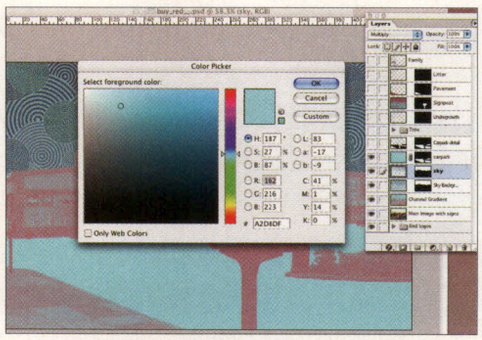
15 APPLY GRADIENT MAP

Select the new layer Main Image With Signs, and go to Image>Adjustments>Gradient Map. Click the gradient window to open the Gradient Editor window. Double-click swatches at the ends of the gradient to open the Colour Picker window. Go for colours 182/151/154 & 164/210/217 from the RGB range.



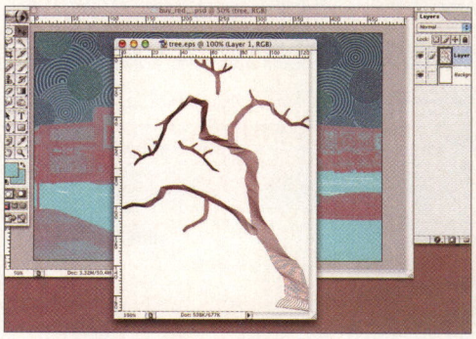
16 CREATE SKY

With the image flattened, you can add other elements to enhance the vector look. Using a vector image created in Freehand, open it in Photoshop and copy it. In the main image load the Sky selection. Hit Paste Into from Edit in the menu bar, resize to fit, and in the Layers palette state Multiply.



17 RE-PAVE THE CARPARK

Using areas of solid flat colour really adds to the vector feel of an image. Choose 162/216/223 from the colour swatch in the toolbar. Load the Carpark selection and choose Edit>Fill. From the Fill palette choose Foreground Color from the Contents box.

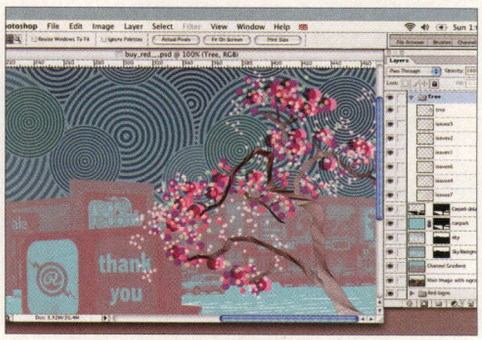


18 CREATE A TREE

We'll now add an illustration created in Freehand to the image. Draw the separate tree elements – trunk and different leaf sizes and colours – onto different Freehand layers. Export each layer as an EPS and open in Photoshop. (You'll find these on your layered Photoshop image.)

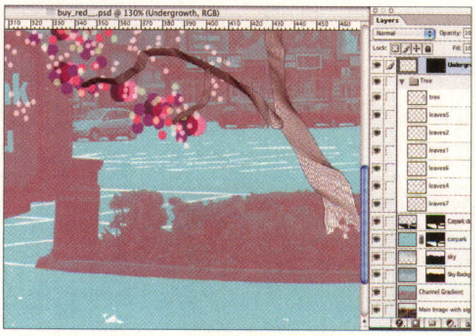
19 MAKE LINE ART BLEND WITH IMAGE

Move the elements so the trunk and leaves relate to one another. Now give a 'see-through' appearance to some of the leaves: In the Layers palette keep the Tree layers' state as Normal but play with a combination of Multiply and Screen layer states on the Leaf layers, to give the leaves some depth.



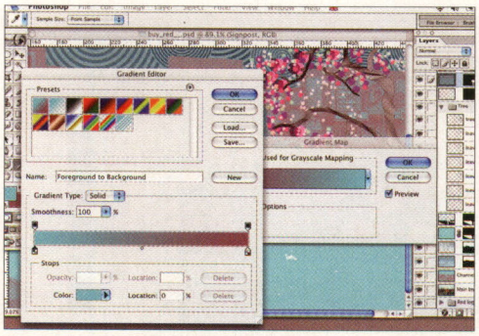
20 GROUP AND APPLY TREE

Once happy with the tree, link the layers in the Layers panel and from the drop-down menu in the top right choose New Set from Linked. Name your set and choose Pass Through in the Mode panel. Now you can resize the whole tree and position it by just selecting the Tree set in Layers.



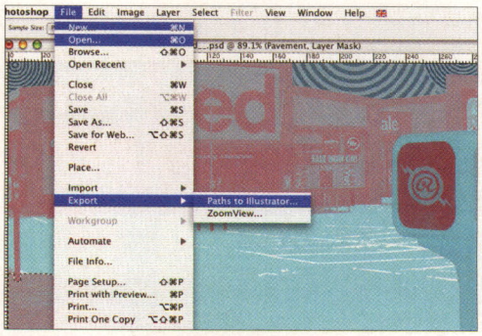
21 BLEND TREE INTO BUSHES

The tree still doesn't fit in, as the trunk looks like it's on top of the bushes rather than emerging from among them. Remedy this using the Lasso. Draw a rough bushy shape where the trunk should emerge. Go to the Channel Gradient layer; hit Copy then Paste Into. Move the layer above the Tree layer set.



22 EDIT THE SIGNPOST

The tree looks like it's in front of the 'Thank You' sign, which is wrong. Go to the Main Image with Signs layer; load the BK_Sign selection. Hit Copy then Paste Into. In this layer, select Gradient Map again, but this time check the box Reverse in the palette. Move this above the Tree layer set.



23 REPAINT THE PAVEMENT 1

Load the Pavement selection. Go to Window>Paths to open Open the Paths palette; in the drop-down choose Make Work Path, set a Tolerance of 1 and hit OK. To export, go to File>Export>Paths to Illustrator. In the Export Paths palette hit Work Path from the Write box.

CREATE A VECTOR-STYLE ILLUSTRATION FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

Layer masks
Different sections of the image can have various fills and effects within them by using masks made from selections

Clone Stamp tool
This tool is great for removing unwanted elements in your photograph. Here we've removed the original logos from the shopfronts

Gradient Map
The whole look and feel of the illustration is based on the Gradient Map tool's effect on a photographic image

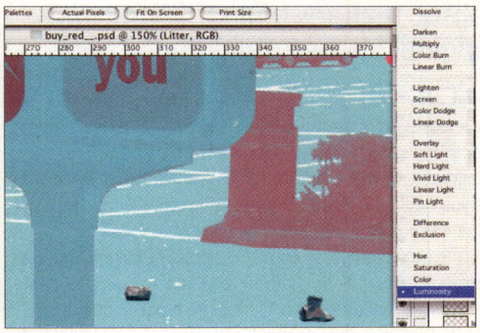
Layer sets
When using multi-layered illustrations within an image, group them together in a layer set for easy management

Lasso tool
Using the Lasso tool, Polygonal Lasso and Magnetic Lasso, the image can be dissected into its various elements

Exporting paths
Selections can be made into paths which can then be exported to vector drawing programs for fine-tuning before being returned to Photoshop

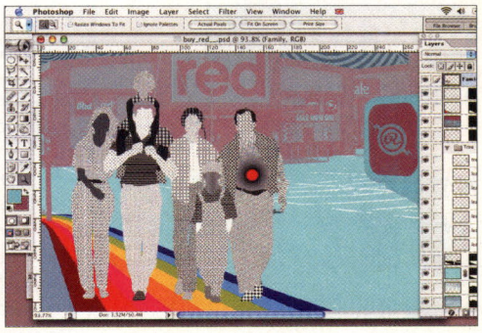
24 REPAINT THE PAVEMENT 2

Having made your drawing in Illustrator or Freehand, re-export to Photoshop and open. Copy your new illustration and paste into the Pavement selection. Resize if necessary – and there you have newly painted pavement!



25 LITTER THE CARPARK

For added detail and interest, we can add some litter to the carpark. Having selected the Main Image with Signs layer in the Layers palette, load the Litter selection and select Copy then Paste Into. Move this layer to the top and make it state Luminosity to keep the litter in the right colour range.



26 THE FINISHING TOUCH

To make this an authentic shopping centre, we need shoppers. Who better than the Red family? You could create an effect yourself, or you could simply export the Freehand-created illustration layer into Photoshop, copy and paste into the main image and resize to fit nicely on the pavement.

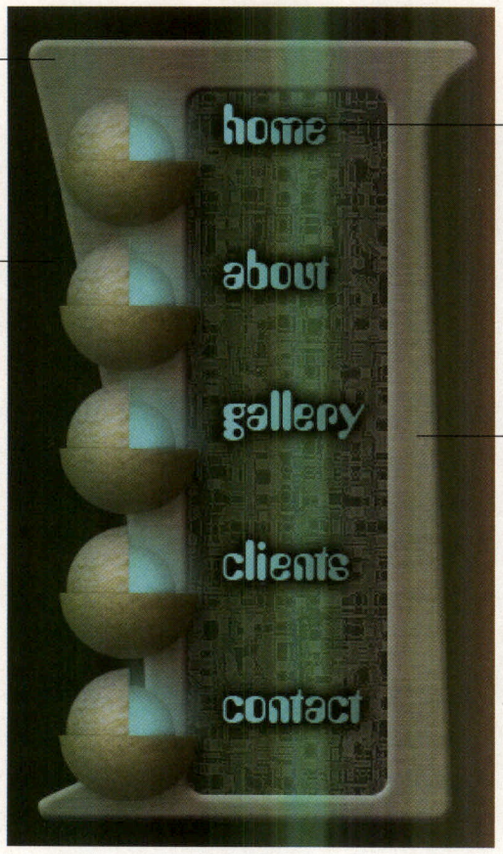
TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
FASHION A FUTURISTIC NAVIGATION BUTTON SET

THE EXPERT: TODD YARD

Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Todd first started using Flash when he moved to New York City (via an acting course in London). He now works for Daedalus Media (**www.daedalusmedia.com**) in New York, and is also lead Flash programmer at ego 7 (**www.ego7.com**). Todd is a regular contributor to the *Friends of Ed* series of books, and specialises in Flash, Illustrator and Photoshop.

Shape layer
A Shape layer, created with shape and pen tools, is used for the abstract metal structure

Composite filters
Composite filters are used for the brushed metal texture and the dented chrome of the spheres



Layer Styles
Layer Styles are applied to the text to make it stand out. Styles were also used to bevel the metal structure

Grunge factor
Grain and a transparent noise gradient were added above the image to increase the grunge factor

FASHION A FUTURISTIC NAVIGATION BUTTON SET

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a metallic and futuristic Web menu

SKILL LEVEL

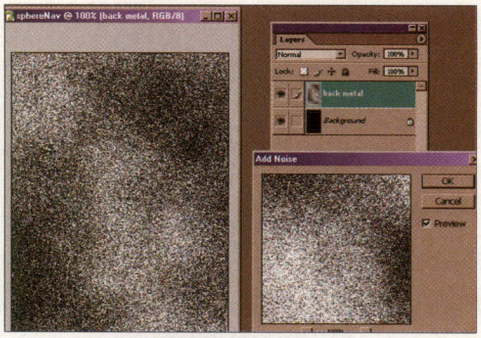
TIME REQUIRED
One hour

ON THE DISC
Photoshop/ Tutorial files: moon.psd, sphere.psd, sphereNav.psd

Create realistic textures and sci-fi structures for your original images using Photoshop

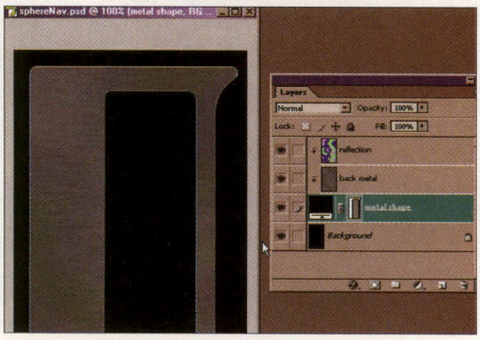
Long ago, Photoshop was simply a photo manipulation tool, but recent releases have turned Adobe's software into much more of a complete image-making solution. From manipulating and enhancing photographs, to Web page design and construction, Photoshop has all the tools you need. It's a great place to bring together images from external sources or other applications and a fantastic playground for experimentation. The more you get to know the program, though, the less necessary it becomes to use other programs. Everything you need to create images, from the realistic to the otherworldly, can be found in Photoshop.

One area in which Photoshop excels is in the creation of sci-fi imagery. Metallic textures and mechanical structures are a cinch to put together, whether you take advantage of pre-built layer styles, utilise the program's many custom filters or paint your image with the brushes and shape tools. In this tutorial we'll create a Web site navigation menu using all these methods. The end result will be ready for the addition of sound effects and some 'wow' animation to create an exciting and futuristic Web experience. ■



1 SETTING UP THE IMAGE

Create a new 300x500 pixel image at 72ppi with a black background. Add a new layer named 'back metal', and on this layer first run Filter>Render>Clouds with the default black and white colours, then run Filter>Noise>Add Noise with Gaussian, monochromatic and 35% as the settings.

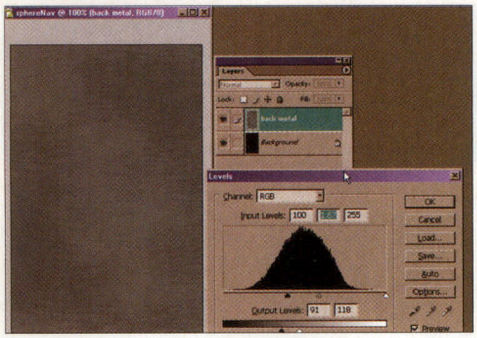


4 METAL SHAPE LAYER

Using the Rounded Rectangle with a 10px radius, draw a tall rectangle. In Properties pick Subtract From Path Area and draw another rectangle in the first. Grab the Arrow and Pen tools; manipulate the outer one to create an interesting shape. Group the Reflection and Back Metal layers with this Shape layer.

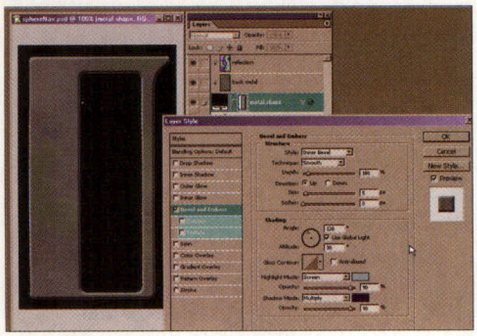
7 DIMMING THE CIRCUITRY

Use the Rectangular marquee to draw a selection round the cut-out portion of the metal shape. Ensure the Tiles layer is selected and hit the Add Layer Mask button at the bottom of the Layers palette. This contains the tiles in the inner rectangle. Set the Tiles Layer blending mode to Screen at 28% opacity.



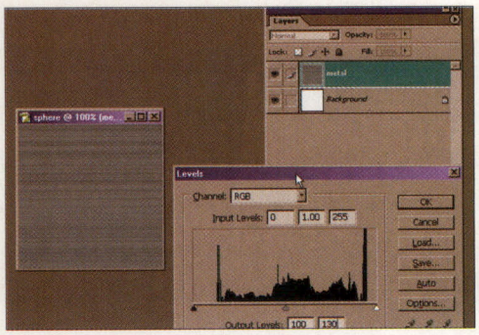
2 MAKING BRUSHED METAL

On the Back Metal layer, run Filter>Blur>Motion Blur at 20 pixels with a 0 degree angle. Next, open Image>Adjustments>Levels (Control & L) and lower the contrast by setting the input levels as 100, 1.67 and 255 and the output levels as 91 and 118.



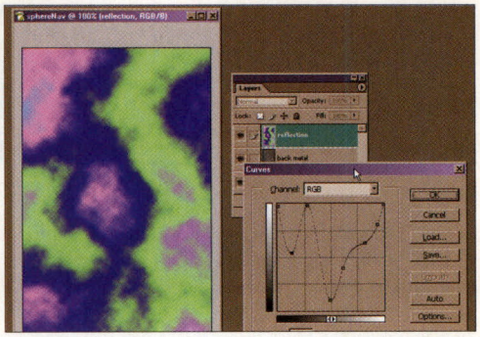
5 BEVELLING THE SHAPE

Double-click the Shape layer to open the Layer Styles dialog. Add a bevel and emboss effect with a smooth inner bevel, 100% depth, 5px size and both the Highlight and Shadow modes set to 90% opacity. For the highlight colour select a light blue and for the shadow colour select a dark indigo.



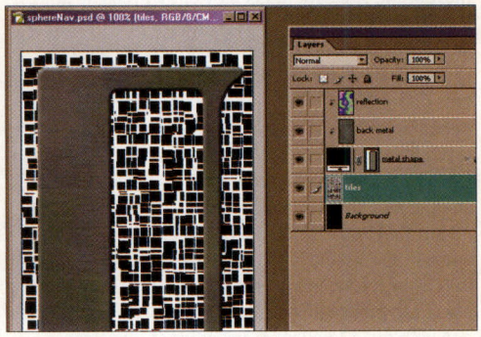
8 LET'S MAKE SOME METAL

Create a new 200x200 pixel 72ppi image file. Duplicate the Background layer and rename it 'metal'. Run Filter>Noise>Add Noise at 100%, then Filter>Blur>Motion Blur at 999px and 0 degrees. Open the Layers dialog (Control & L) and change the Output levels to 100 and 130.



3 ADDING METALLIC REFLECTION

Create a new layer, 'reflection', and run Filter>Render>Clouds with red and green in the toolbox colour wells. Open the Curves dialog (Image>Adjustments>Curves or Control & M) and wildly manipulate the curve to create a multicoloured effect. Hit OK and then change the layer opacity to 5%.



6 ADDING CIRCUITRY

Duplicate the Background layer and rename the dupe 'tiles'. With black and white in the colour wells (D), run Filter>Stylize>Tiles, with Number of Tiles and Maximum Offset both set at 5. Run it a second time, with Number and Offset at 15, then a third time with Number and Offset at 20.

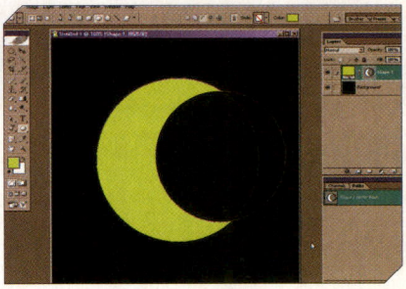
9 CREATE A DENTED CHROME TEXTURE

Create a new layer and select the Gradient tool. In the Properties bar, select a linear gradient option and the Chrome gradient preset, then drag the mouse down the new layer while holding Shift to apply the gradient. Run Filter>Distort>Ocean Ripple with a size of 4 and magnitude of 15.

TECHNIQUE

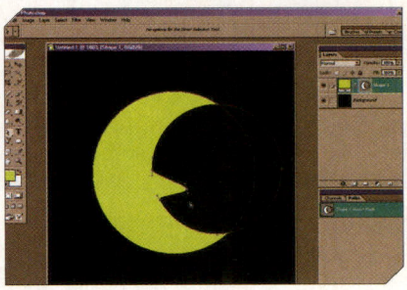
KNOWING THE SHAPE TOOLS

Being able to draw and manipulate vector shapes in Photoshop is important. With so many tools and options, users who aren't familiar with vector programs may feel daunted. Here, we look at the Shape tools and how they may be utilised.



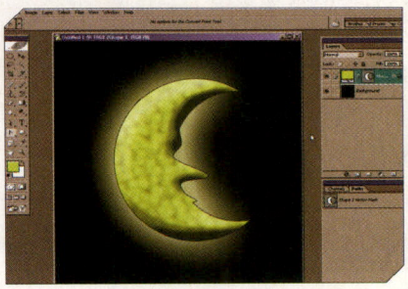
1 SHAPING A CRESCENT

In a new image with a black background, pick the Ellipse tool and a yellow foreground colour. Hold Shift and draw a circle. With Ellipse selected, change the option in Properties to Subtract From Shape Area and draw a smaller ellipse that cuts into the first.



2 MOON RHINOPLASTY

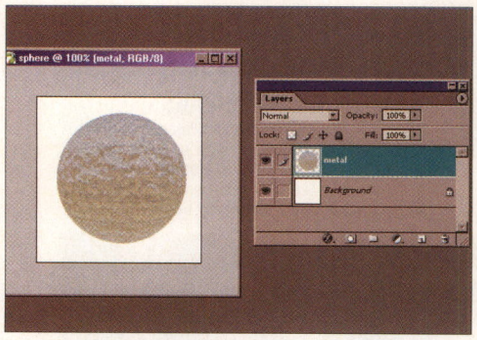
Hit the Add Anchor Point tool and click three times near the centre of the crescent. Change to the Direct Selection tool and select the central point. Drag it to the right to form the nose of the personified moon. Drag the Bezier handles to manipulate further.



3 MAKING A MOON GLOW

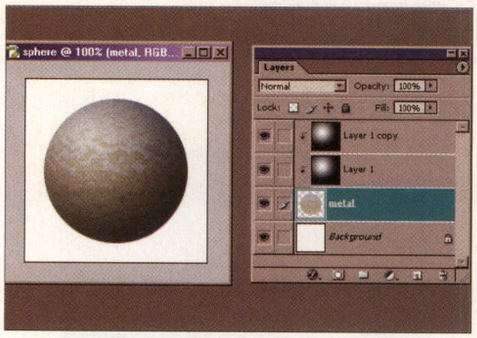
Add Layer Style effects like a bevel and emboss, outer glow and texture to create a glowing moon effect. Use the Add Anchor Point and Direct Selection tools to add and manipulate additional points on the crescent for the brow and lips.

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
FASHION A FUTURISTIC NAVIGATION BUTTON SET



10 DISTORTING A METAL SPHERE

Set the Chrome layer to Screen at 40%, then merge it with the Metal layer. Run Filter>Noise>Add Noise at 5%, then use the Elliptical marquee while holding Shift to select a circle in the middle of the Metal layer. Run Filter>Distort>Spherize at 100%, then invert the selection and hit Delete.



11 GIVING SHAPE TO THE SPHERE

Create a new layer and fill it with a white to black radial gradient with the centre at the upper left of the sphere. Group this with Metal and set its blending mode to Multiply at 55%. Duplicate this and change the dupe's blending mode to Overlay at 40%. Merge the two gradient layers with Metal.

IN DETAIL: FILTERS IN PHOTOSHOP CS

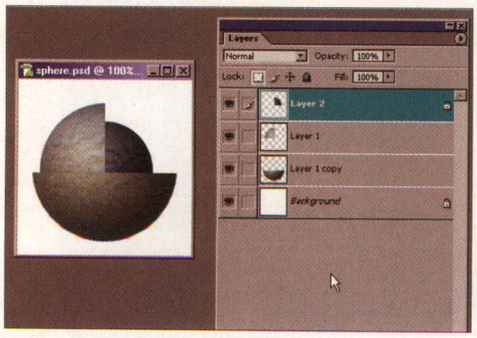
Experimenting with image manipulation is now even easier with the new Filter Gallery in Photoshop CS

When layers were introduced in Photoshop, a new freedom was granted to users. Images could be manipulated and experimented with without fear of losing image info or harming an image. Imagine painting with the knowledge that no matter how you drew the brush across the canvas you could undo a mistake and return to an earlier version of your work! (Multiple 'undos' and the History palette were other additions that added to this freedom.)

With Photoshop CS, users have been given even more freedom to experiment through the addition of the new Filter Gallery dialog. This impressive window houses most of the standard filters previously available in Photoshop in a single interface (although some filters are absent, which is a shame but will no doubt be rectified in later versions). Users can apply filters multiple times or combine different ones to see the effects before applying the composite effect to the image and leaving the dialog. Once filters have been stacked up in a composite effect, they can be dragged about in the stack, made invisible or have their values altered. This means that instead of applying a filter to a layer, then another and another, only to discover that the composite isn't as expected and having to undo and backtrack, the effect can be tested in a single window in far less time and with more freedom to experiment. Tweaking multiple filters in this dialog also helps keep images from appearing as if only consisting of prefabricated effects, as the possible permutations are staggering. Add the ability to fade the effects or reapply them in the same ways as standard filters, and you have an impressive new tool. ■

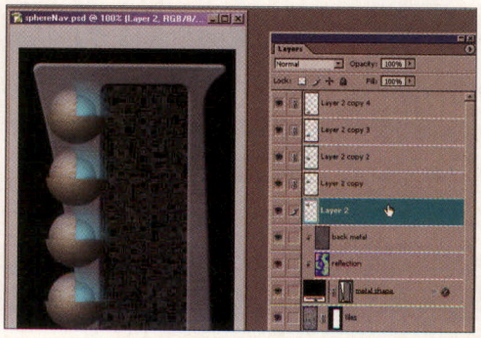
The new Filter Gallery in Photoshop CS places all of the most commonly-used image effects within one handy palette

Don't like the effect you currently have? Simply undo it and choose another one from the massive gamut within the Filter Gallery



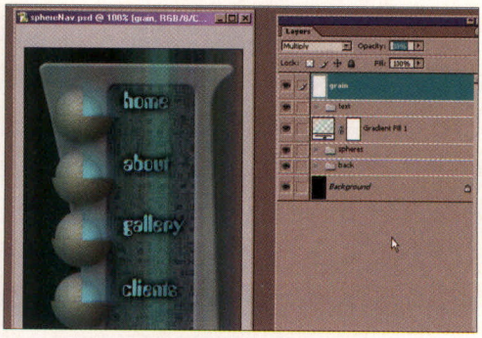
12 SECTIONING THE SPHERE

Select the top half of the sphere and hit Control & Shift & J to create a new layer from the selection. Shrink this layer's image, select the right half and hit Control & Shift & J again. Shrink this quarter-sphere further, then use Levels (Control & L) to darken it. Now merge all sphere wedges.



13 POSITION THE GLOWING SPHERES

On a new layer, draw a cyan to transparent radial gradient radiating from centre. Use a layer mask to contain the gradient in the upper right, then merge it with the sphere. Drag the sphere to the original image and resize it by 50%. Dupe it four times; place all five vertically over the metal shape.



14 ADDING NAVIGATION LABELS

Add a label to the right of each sphere and apply Layer Style effects to make the text stand out. Add a Gradient adjustment layer over the image, but under the text with a transparent noise gradient. Create a new layer on top, fill it with white and set to Multiply, then run Filter>Texture>Grain.

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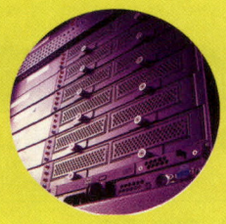

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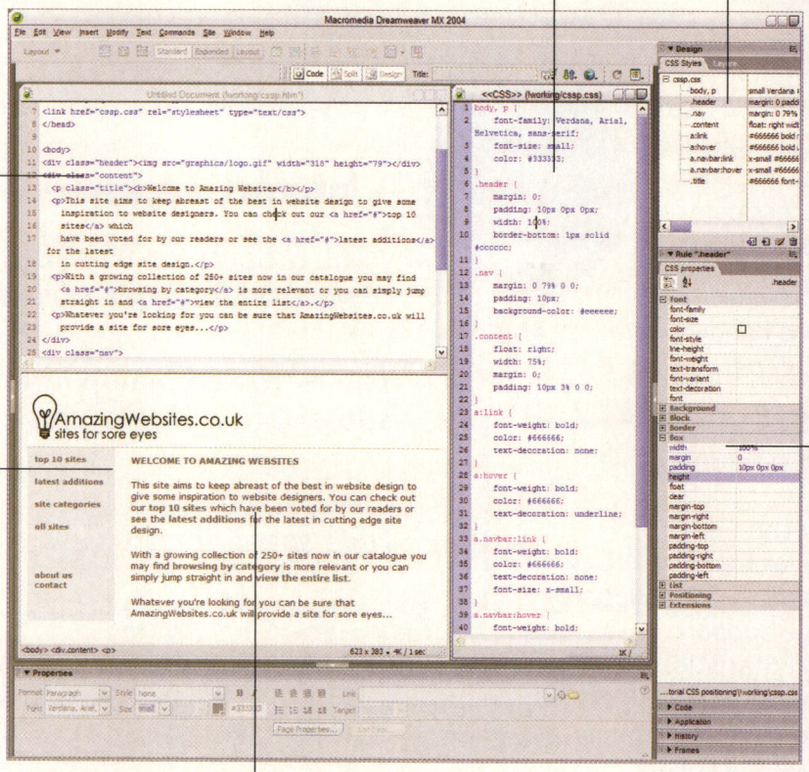
BUILD BETTER WEB PAGES BY USING CSS POSITIONING

THE EXPERT: CHRIS SCHMIDT
Chris has been developing Web sites for nigh on ten years for clients ranging from the British Council through to the Brodsky Quartet. He is a joint partner in his own Web design company, track5 (**www.track5.co.uk**), and regularly contributes to various Web and graphic design magazines.

Styles panel
With the increased reliance on CSS, the CSS Styles panel comes much more into play. From here we can add, edit or create new style commands to control the appearance of our page and its contents

Box and Border
The HTML code is much reduced, as the layout is determined through the linked CSS file. The Box and Border categories help to organise the page layout and provide some visual indication, as you might by turning on your table borders



Code
Using CSS Positioning, the code of our final page is constructed through Cascading Style Sheets commands that control the appearance of the tag container

Options
The resulting page is indiscernible to the viewer, but the options available through CSS-P make it easier for the page author to make changes without having to rebuild the page

Properties panel
Using the new CSS Properties panel, we can make comprehensive amendments to the reliant CSS to further adapt the layout of our page without needing to go through lengthy editing procedures that were previously associated with the method within Dreamweaver

Insert content
Regular content is inserted into the created containers as you would with a regular table cell. Copy and images can be freely added and controlled through regular CSS, for example

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
To replace HTML tables with CSS-P for more accurate page layout

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
An hour

ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial files: cssp.css, cssp.htm, graphics [folder]

BUILD BETTER WEB PAGES BY USING CSS POSITIONING

HTML tables have been used since the year dot to determine page layout, but CSS Positioning gives us a little more control...

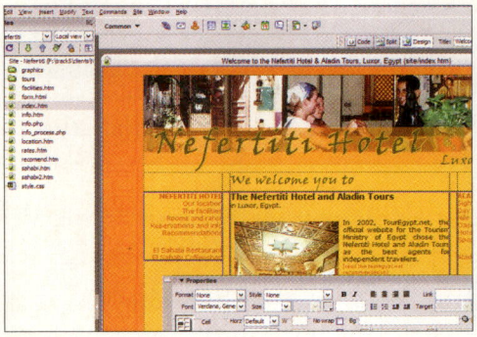
You can't fail to have noticed the growing acceptance of Cascading Style Sheets in Web design. The weird thing, though, is that most designers barely touch on CSS' full potential. You may have dabbled with the Box and Border attributes to create outlines around content or links, but there is more to the feature than merely adding cosmetic enhancements to your work.

The principle allows greater control over your page layout, making the use of tables redundant because you position content with more precision and reliability than is possible through the pure HTML alternative. And when put in context of text sizing and formatting, you can start to appreciate the control that CSS promises for general page layout. However, there are limitations of using CSS-P for developing your page structure, as you'll discover when you start to test your pages across different browser/platform combinations.

Despite the promises, this is still a developing technology, but the approach we use here should give you a head start. ■

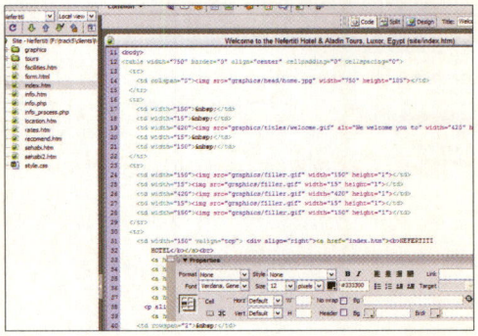
TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER

BUILD BETTER WEB PAGES BY USING CSS POSITIONING



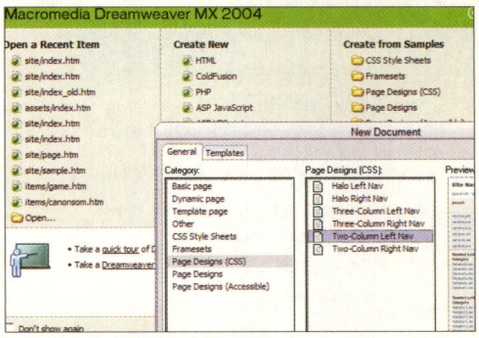
1 THE TRADITIONAL WAY

The traditional method of creating a Web page layout is to make use of HTML tables. This provides a combination of table rows and cells that can be merged and arranged to form the basic structure necessary to contain the page content.



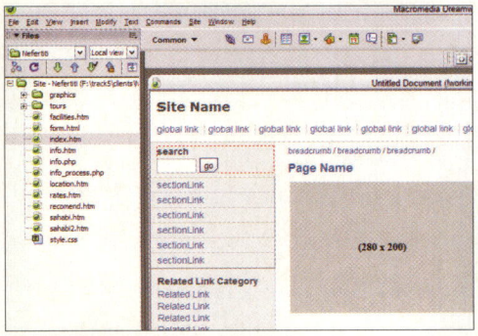
2 BLOATED CODE

Although this has remained the most popular way of defining the page structure for quite some time, there are some problems with the method. For example, the linear code is full of the necessary tags, making changes clumsy.



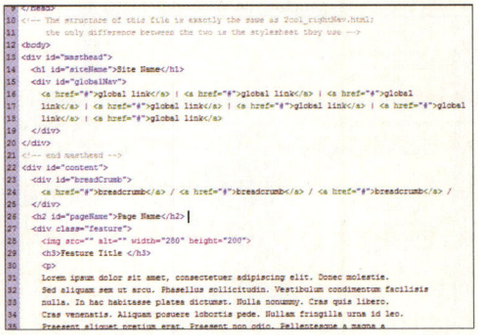
3 LOOKING FORWARD

Through CSS Positioning we are promised a new method of managing page layout that offers a higher level of flexibility. To see the effect in action, select the Page Designs (CSS) option from the Start screen and choose the Two-Column Left Nav option before hitting Create.



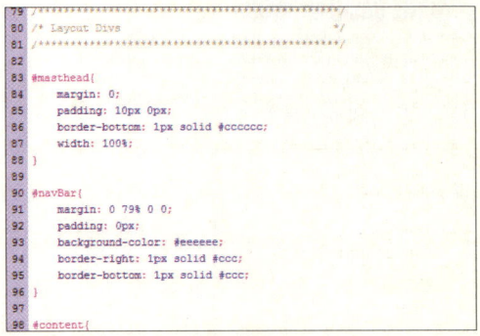
4 SAVE LOCATION

To fully appreciate the rendered page, you'll need to specify a filename and location for both the HTML page and the related style sheet – after which you'll be presented with the new page that contains only HTML and CSS code. There are no images or tables used.



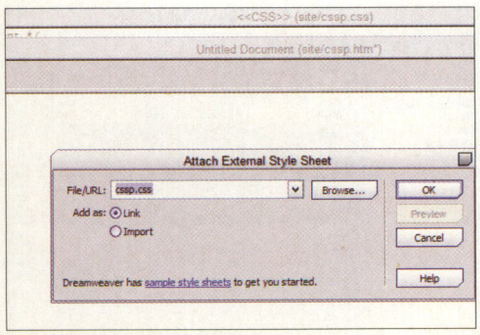
5 LOOK AT THE CODE

If you move into Code view using the controls at the head of the page and look through the generated HTML, you'll notice the lack of table tags. The entire layout is determined through tags that reference commands from the related CSS file.



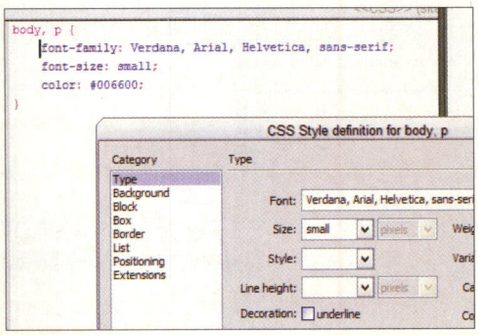
6 DETERMINING STYLES

Take a look at the code within the related CSS file, and you'll soon discover that the clearly commented code allows easy access to the all-important Layout Divs commands, which are used to control the basic page layout in place of the outdated table tags found in earlier methods.



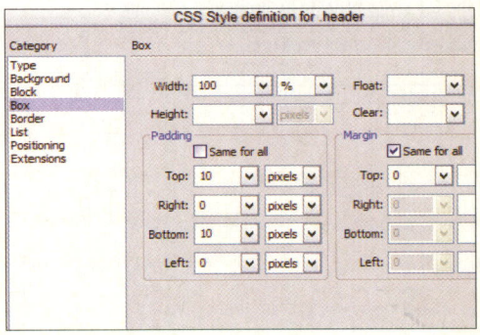
7 BACK TO BASICS

Using the predefined samples is one way of getting to grips with CSS-P, but the additional code may distract you from the base code required, so we'll run through things from scratch. Create regular HTML and CSS files and associate them to each other.



8 REGULAR TEXT

The first thing to do is configure the regular text attributes your page will rely on. This should be straightforward enough for you, but use the above as a guide if you like, taking care to apply the properties to both the <body> and <p> tags.



9 DEFINING THE HEADER

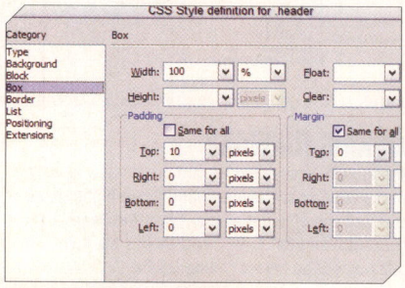
We can now move on to setting the attributes for the page header area. Create a new Class Selector type, naming this 'header' and choose the Box category, setting the width at 100% and the top and bottom padding at 10 pixels. Set the margin to 0 by checking the Same For All option.

TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER
BUILD BETTER WEB PAGES BY USING CSS POSITIONING

TECHNIQUE

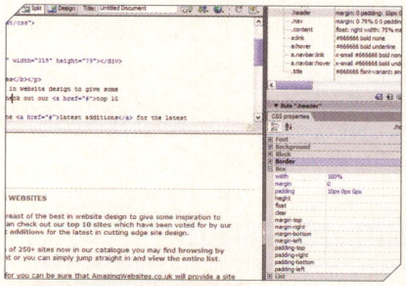
CSS EDITING METHODS

The syntax behind CSS isn't difficult, but unless you're familiar with the potential it can be as easy or as hard as you make it. There's more than one way of editing CSS code, and you may find some methods suit you better than others.



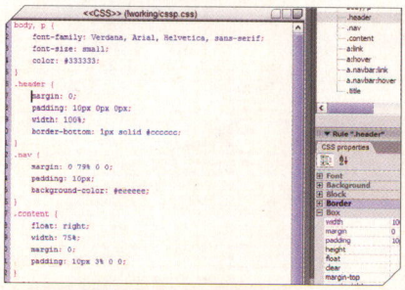
1 THE BASIC METHOD

Most users will be familiar with the Wizard approach to editing CSS in Dreamweaver, as this has been the primary method over various previous versions. You simply choose a category and make the necessary changes to the right-hand area.



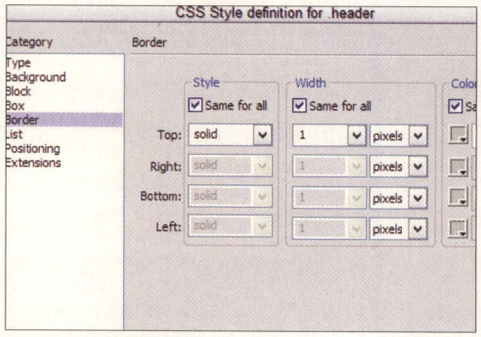
2 THE MX 2004 METHOD

More control is available through Dreamweaver MX 2004 via the new CSS Properties panel. You can now choose individual classes from the CSS Styles panel to be presented with more direct options for much quicker editing, while being guided with possible options.



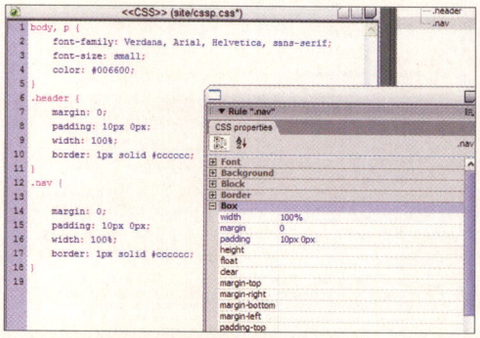
3 THE CODER'S METHOD

For those who know their CSS, the most efficient method is direct editing to the CSS file itself – now possible in the new version of Dreamweaver. This has many advantages, not least through parallel support via the CSS Properties panel.



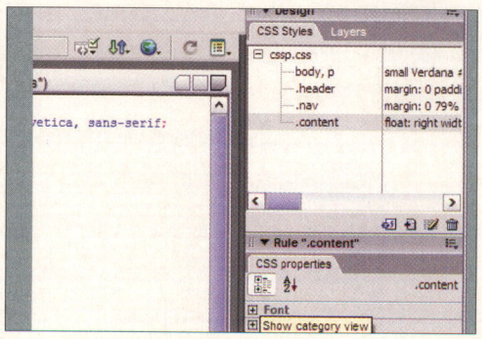
10 VISUAL BORDERS

Move on to the Border category and copy the above settings. Again, keeping the Same For All option checked will keep the properties consistent across all four sides of the header region we're defining. A solid, one-pixel border with a subtle colour value will help to visualise the element.



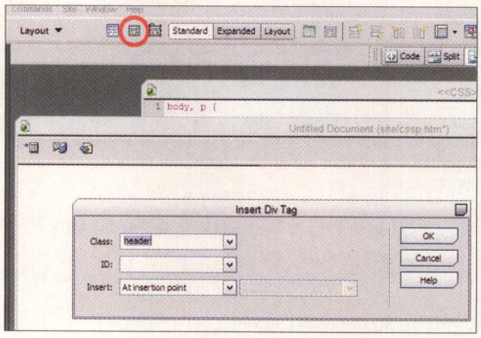
13 LEFT-HAND NAVIGATION

The same process needs applying to the left-hand navigation container. Duplicate the .Header class and name this '.Nav'. However, for another method of adapting the CSS information turn to the CSS Properties panel, which is a new feature to Dreamweaver MX 2004.



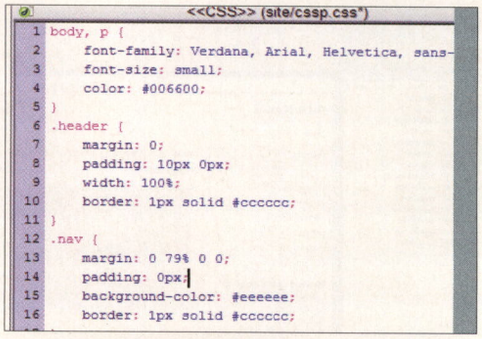
16 THE MAIN CONTENT AREA

All that's left now as we define the page layout is to determine the parameters of the main body area. Duplicate either the .header or .nav class elements and give the new object a logical descriptive name such as '.body'.



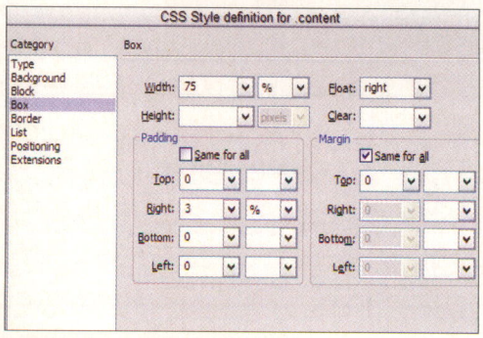
11 EMBED TO THE PAGE

OK the new class and return to the main HTML page. Choose the Layout option from the Insert panel and click the Insert Div Tag option. This prompts the related dialog, allowing you to choose the Header class which needs inserting at the insertion point at the head of the page.



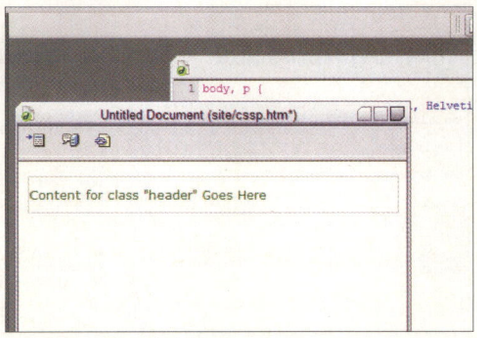
14 ADAPT THE DUPLICATE

Use this panel to make the necessary changes: revise the margin, padding and border as illustrated above, and add a background colour to enhance the distinction. The margin value dictates the spacing in relation to the browser window size, leaving 79% space to the right of the tag.



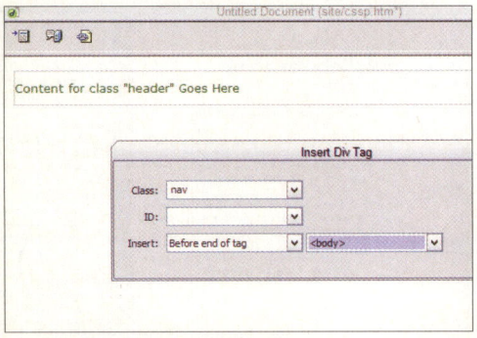
17 FURTHER AMENDMENT

Leave the Border category settings unchanged so we can see the new element as we continue to develop the page layout, but make changes to the Box, setting the width at 75%, floating the object to the right and adding right-hand padding of 3% as illustrated above.



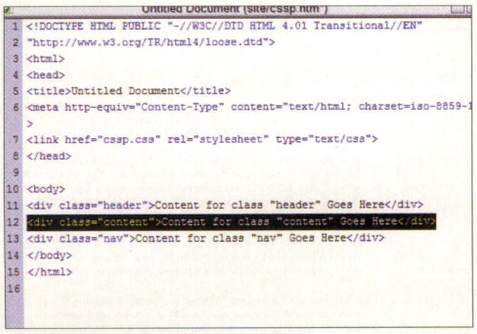
12 APPLY THE REGION

Once you've OK'd the new ** ** tag, you'll see the container in place. Because we've configured the single pixel border around the object, you'll get some indication of its spatial requirements, while the temporary text allows you to position new content within the container.



15 INSERT THE NAV AREA

Save the CSS file once complete, and return to the HTML file to insert the new tag as we did before. This time, however, choose to insert the new class before the end of the <body> tag, using the Insert Div Tag dialog to make the necessary configuration.



18 PUT IN PLACE

OK the changes once more and return to the HTML file to once again insert the new tag in place. Due to the linear nature of HTML you'll need to embed this between the header and the <nav div> tags to ensure accurate positioning.

IN DETAIL: TESTING, TESTING, 1, 2, 3...

With CSS Positioning still in its infancy, you'll need to make sure you test your page layouts...

Despite the potential CSS Positioning promises, don't rely too heavily on the Dreamweaver screen render to indicate how your page layout will appear. As with anything you create for the Web, it is essential that you test your pages constantly through as many browser versions as possible and against as many platform/browser combinations as you can.

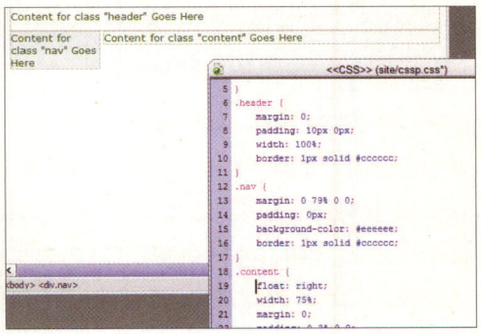
The principles behind CSS Positioning are still to be formally approved by the Web's governing body, the World Wide Web Consortium (**www.w3c.org**). It is unlikely its approval will dictate many changes, but its current status dictates that comprehensive testing is imperative if you want to ensure your pages view as you'd anticipated. Dreamweaver will let you test your pages through your preferred primary and secondary browsers by hitting the F12 and Control&F12 keys respectively, and although the method provides a quick glimpse into the actual render of your page, you mustn't forget other platforms that you work in.

Most professional Web designers will have both Apple and Windows computers on their desks for just such an eventuality and will be constantly testing their sites across the various browser/platform combinations, but if you don't have access to both, you'll probably know someone who can help you out.

Only experience and experimentation will highlight potential problem areas of your coding, whether this is CSS-P or even HTML-related, and you'll soon be working around these with your eyes shut. Paying close attention during the development stage of your site build will help save wasted time and prevent embarrassment. ■

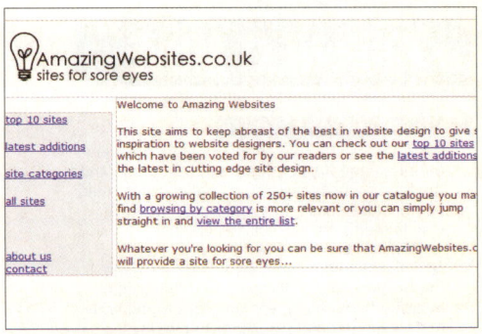
■ Test your pages at every step, and you can virtually eliminate the annoying compatibility problems that often blight new Web sites

■ More often than not, your pages will look good on both Windows and Mac platforms, but that doesn't mean you should check anyway...



19 VIEW THE RESULTS

Back in Design view you'll notice how the inclusion of the three basic tags and the way the CSS is inherited provides the basis for our page layout. Vary the size of the window to see how the percentage values create dynamic table dimensions that continue to fill the page.



20 ADDING CONTENT

With the basic layout constructed we can now begin to introduce regular content into the page. The containers will expand dynamically to accommodate the content, as the page is populated with regular content such as text and images, which can be further influenced through CSS.

BUILD BETTER WEB PAGES BY USING CSS POSITIONING

GEEK SPEAK

CLASS
A CSS type that can be freely associated with virtually any HTML object through the 'class=value' attribute which can be embedded within most surrounding tags. This is in contrast with the Tag Selector type, which will define the appearance of a specific HTML tag.

FLOAT
A CSS command that functions in a similar way to the regular HTML Align option. By floating the main content cell to the right, we ensured the area was positioned to the right of the navigation as opposed to wrapping beneath it.

PADDING AND MARGIN
Padding is the area of space within an object, while the margin is the space around it. If you imagine the border of an object to be the defining area, the padding and margin regions become easier to comprehend.

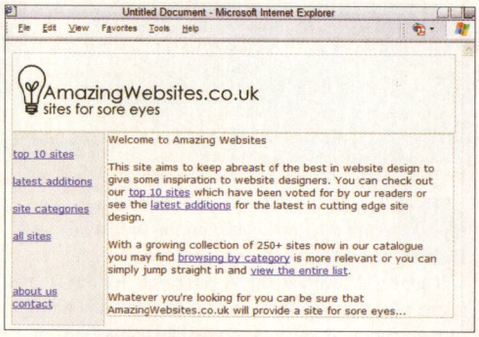
RELATIVE DIMENSIONS
Making use of dimensions in terms of percentage values allows the page layout to be defined in terms relative to the actual browser window, as opposed to making more set dimensions in pixels, which is considered absolute.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

MULTI-COLUMN LAYOUTS
Our final results have created a basic page layout of a page header, left-hand navigation and the primary body area. And although this could be enough to base a page around, the end results aren't going to be too original.

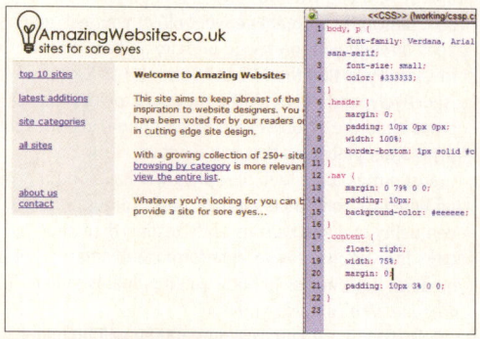
Why not try experimenting with more ambitious multi-column layouts by adapting the techniques we've introduced? You could even try to overlap layers to play around with more experimental results, or to overlay regular HTML text that may run over both the image and the background.

Once you start experimenting with the approach to laying out your Web pages, you'll soon discover a whole range of options available to you that were previously considered impossible through regular HTML.



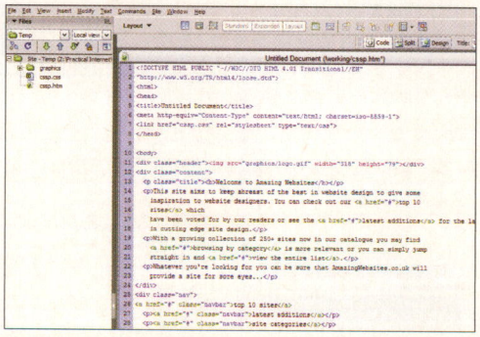
21 BROWSER PREVIEW
Once you start to introduce content, you may find minor anomalies creep into your page design. But before you start to rely too heavily on how Dreamweaver renders the page layout, be sure to check through the browser to see how things are actually presented.

22 LAYOUT MODIFICATIONS
We can now start to remove some of the borders that were introduced to help visualise the page structure. Here, for example, we've removed all the borders other than the one at the foot of the header to keep a natural divider between the header and the content.

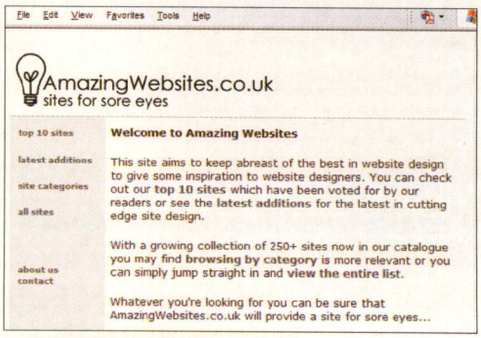


23 PERFECT PADDING
We also made further changes to the padding to ensure the best alignment between the layout components, and to give their contents a little more breathing space to make things more legible and enhance the natural gutters you'd normally associate with page layout.

24 FURTHER ENHANCEMENTS
Changing the link properties is the next stage, which employs regular CSS modification to put the finishing touches to the page design. We've made use of unique class attributes for the navigation links to lower the importance of this region without disturbing the main copy.



25 SLIMLINE CODE
And when you take a look at the code that supports the entire page including the copy, you'll soon see how much more efficient the CSS-P method of laying pages becomes. The method has other advantages, not least through the flexibility provided for experimenting with layout variation.



26 THE FINAL RESULTS
The final layout may not be too groundbreaking, as we've deliberately kept things simple to help you grasp the concept. But considering the flexibility layers provide over clunky tables, it becomes easy to see how the future of Web page layout will shape up.

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THE EXPERT: MARK BILLEN
Mark studied Software Engineering and Management at Bournemouth University for four years, a course which saw him tackle heavyweight languages like Java and JavaScript, and develop his already burgeoning experience in HTML and CSS. Allied to this, Mark has also been a keen artist for many years, and likes nothing more than to create stunning pieces of digital art.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Build a site suitable for WAP-enabled browsers

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
45 minutes

ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial files: april.wml, events.wml, logo.wbmp, march.wml, may.wml

PART THREE

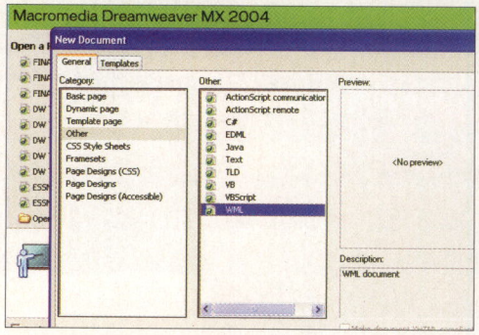
BUILD A SITE TO WORK ON EVERY PLATFORM

We show you how Dreamweaver MX can be used to extend Web design beyond the realms of HTML, with our step-by-step guide to creating cross-browser pages

Our previous two issues showed you how to create Web pages for different static browsers. The boom in mobile technology has led to a demand for info on the move as well, however, so our final guide aims to dispel the mystery behind this development by building a WAP site. This again takes the form of an Events Diary, built for cross-browser support previously, and uses WML rather than HTML to define content.

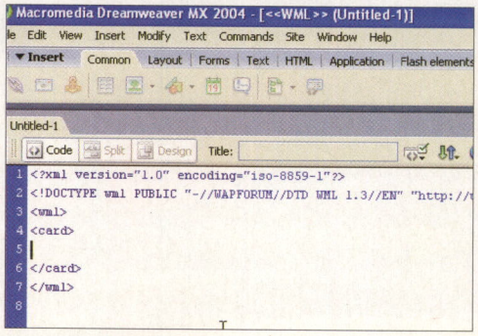
Wireless Markup Language is a scaled-down protocol that uses just a few basic tags to display text, images and links. Pages are condensed into chunks or 'cards' better suited to smaller displays, with collections of cards representing the overall site. These 'decks' can be long but allow embedded browsers to rapidly download everything in one go.

We'll explore this using Dreamweaver's template support for hand coding WML projects, and examine how WAP browsers and resources can assist the process. ■



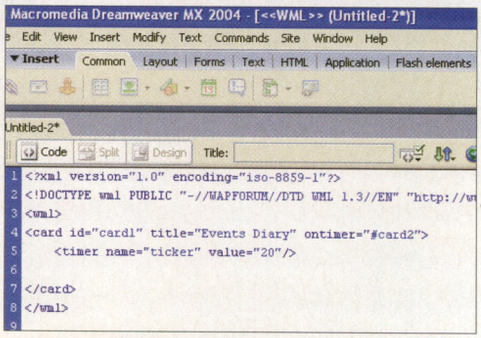
1 NEW START

To begin working on our WAP site, we first need to open up Dreamweaver and select the correct page template. On the Project wizard dialog click the More folder under Create New and navigate to the Other category in the New Document window. Select WML and click Create.



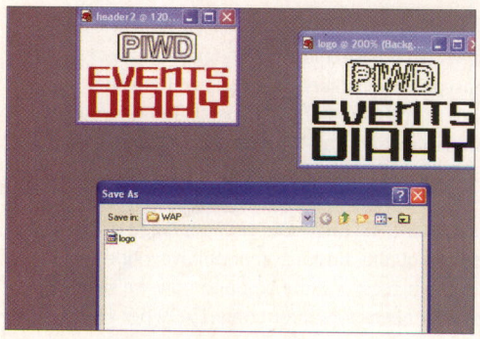
2 HEADERS UP

The new template is only available in Code view, and will initially only consist of the main header tags for defining a new WML deck. You'll notice that a new <card> tag has been included, and it is here where the content for each WAP 'page' will be placed.



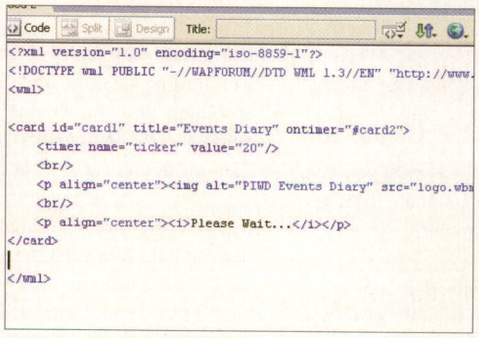
3 NEW CARD

There are two main attributes that we must add to all WML cards. Each must be uniquely named with 'id' and given a 'title' string that will appear at the top. This first card is also a splash screen, so we've added event and timer tags that will automatically load the next card in the deck.



4 WIRELESS LOGO

WAP images or logos are designed to be as compact in size and resolution as possible, and need to be saved in .WBMP format. You can convert pictures, like this smaller version of our existing Events Diary logo, by simply saving them with the new filetype in Paint Shop Pro.



5 ADDING IMAGES

Under the Timer tag of our first card we want to insert the necessary content. You'll notice that the tags we use are much like HTML, with paragraphs defined with <p> and breaks forced with </br>. The Image tag is also used to add our saved WBMP logo and supply some substitute alt text.

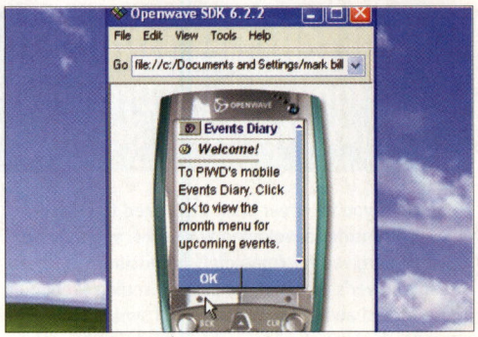
6 TO THE TEST

Save your current deck file by clicking Save As and naming it 'events.wml'. We now need to load the file into our WAP-enabled browser (see page 54) and see how the first card looks. If the code has been followed correctly you should see the Intro screen before the timer moves on.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<!DOCTYPE wml PUBLIC "-//WAPFORUM//DTD WML 1.3//EN" "http://www.wapforum.org/DTD/wml
<wml>

<card id="card1" title="Events Diary" ontimer="#card2">
    <timer name="ticker" value="20"/>
    <br/>
    <p align="center"><img alt="PIWD Events Diary" src="logo.wbmp"/></p>
    <br/>
    <p align="center"><i>Please Wait...</i></p>
</card>

<card id="card2" title="Events Diary">
    <p><img alt=":-)" localsrc="smileyface"/>  <em><i>Welcome!</i></em></p
    <p><hr size="3" align="left" width="70%"/></p>
    <p>To PIWD's mobile Events Diary. Click OK to view the month menu for upcoming e
    <do type="accept">
        <go href="#card3"/>
    </do>
</card>

</wml>
```

7 GREETINGS

The next card greets visitors with some interesting new tags. An <img> tag uses a localsrc attribute to reference a built-in icon of a smiley face, while a familiar <hr> tag adds a line for decoration. The <do> and <go> tags set up a link to the next page via the device's OK button.



8 CHECK LINKS

Viewing the saved deck not only shows how the new card looks, but also how interface links operate. A screen command labelled 'OK' is shown above a corresponding handset button, which when clicked, will transport the user to the card referenced in the link.

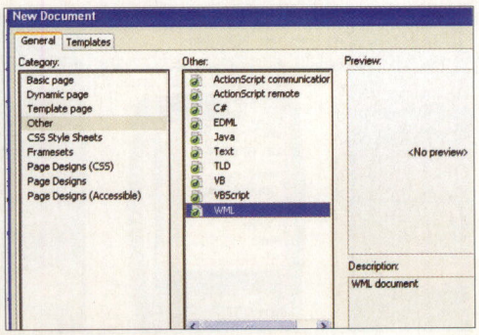
```
d="card3" title="Events Diary">
/>
<img alt="-->" localsrc="book3"/>  <em>Month Menu</em></p>
<hr size="3" align="left" width="85%"/></p>
ble align="center" columns="2">
 <tr>
     <td><em>1</em></td>
     <td><anchor title="March" accesskey="1"><go href="march.wml"/>March
 </tr>
 <tr>
     <td><em>2</em></td>
     <td><anchor title="April" accesskey="2"><go href="april.wml"/>April
 </tr>
 <tr>
     <td><em>3</em></td>
     <td><anchor title="May" accesskey="3"><go href="may.wml"/>May 2004</
 </tr>
able>
```

9 LINK TABLES

Card three will function as the main selection screen for choosing each calendar month for the diary. The code shows we've used a simple table element to arrange several links into two columns. Each option number corresponds to the <anchor> tags which will point to new decks.

10 MONTHLY MENU

Save the deck once again and load the file into your browser. Navigate to the Month menu and you'll see that the diary icon, heading and horizontal rule are shown above the table of links. The accesskey attribute for each link enables selection with both the numeric and arrow keys.



11 FRESH DECK

With WAP sites it is quite important to modularise the data and make decks quicker to load. Therefore, we need to create new WML files for each month by opening new templates in Dreamweaver. Select New from the File menu and use the dialog to start a new document.

```
1 <?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
2 <!DOCTYPE wml PUBLIC "-//WAPFORUM//DTD WML 1.3//EN" "http://w
3 <wml>
4
5 <card id="menu" title="Events Diary">
6     <p>
7     <img alt="-->" localsrc="calendar"/>  <em>March
8     </p>
9     <p><hr size="3" align="left" width="80%"/></p>
0     <table align="center" columns="5">
1         <tr>
2             <td><small>1</small></td><td><small>2</small></td
3
4             <td><anchor title="3rd"><go href="#3"/>3</anchor><
5
6             <td><small>4</small></td><td><small>5</small></td
```

12 CALENDAR VIEW

Each month's deck will have a main selection screen for picking individual event days. This is done by inserting a table listing all the days in each month, with those featuring events highlighted as links. Use a five-column table to add all the cells, and the <small> tag to reduce the text size.

TECHNIQUE

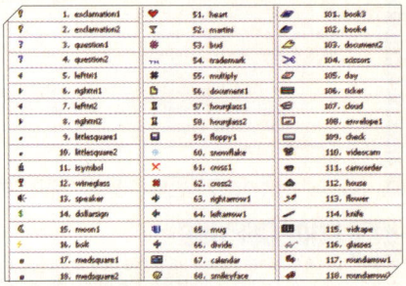
INVESTIGATING THE IMAGE TAG

The .WBMP image format is for WAP. Wireless Bitmaps are easily downloaded and displayed at low resolutions, and are referenced by the <img> tag. We look at the attributes of this element and see how they're used to maximum effect.

```
events.wml  march.wml  april.wml  may.wml  Untitled-1*
Code  Split  Design  Title:
1 <?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
2 <!DOCTYPE wml PUBLIC "-//WAPFORUM//DTD WML 1.3//EN" "http:
3 <wml>
4 <card id="card1" title="Image Example">
5
6     //The image tag below uses three attributes to referen
7     //alternative text, an external image, or a locally st
8
9     <img alt="PIWD Events Diary" src="logo.wbmp" localsrc="
10
11 </card>
12 </wml>
13
```

1 TAGGED UP

The <img> tag uses three fundamental attributes that should be made use of where possible. Like HTML, the alt attribute displays a text string when the image cannot be loaded, while src points to relative .WBMP files.



2 LOCAL SOURCES

Online documentation detailing the language constraints of WML also provide the reference names you need to call on localsrc icons. A large collection is available, and you should get into the habit of using them to avoid loading external images into the WAP browser's cache.

3 HOW IT LOOKS

Loading example tags into the browser is a good way to test how your <img> tags will appear. Here you can see how text from the alt attribute would be displayed, and how images defined by the src and localsrc will look when loaded by the code.

13 LINK FROM THE MENU

Finish adding all the day cells before saving the deck as 'march.wml'. In the WAP browser you should be able to link to it from the Month menu and see all the anchored days selectable from the table. We'll purposely leave the provision of a Back button to the handset or device.

```
<<WML>> (WAP/may.wml)
1 <?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
2 <!DOCTYPE wml PUBLIC "-//WAPFORUM//DTD WML 1.3//EN" "http://ww
3 <wml>
4 <card id="menu" title="Events Diary">
5     <p>
6     <img alt="-->" localsrc="calendar"/>  <em>May 20
7     </p>
8     <p><hr size="3" align="left" width="80%"/></p>
9     <table align="center" columns="5">
0         <tr>
1             <td><small>1</small></td><td><small>2</small></td>
2             <td><small>3</small></td><td><small>4</small></td>
3             <td><anchor title="5th"><go href="#5"/>5</anchor><
4         </tr>
5         <tr>
6             <td><small>6</small></td><td><small>7</small></td>
```

14 CODE COPYING

Once you are happy with the Day Selection menu for March you can easily produce the others for all the subsequent months. Copy the first card into each of the new decks and simply amend the headings and table dates to fit with the days in the month, while remembering to change the links.

```
            <td><anchor title="28th"><go href="#28"/>28</anchor></td>
            <td><small>29</small></td><td><small>30</small></td>
        </tr>
        <tr>
            <td><small>31</small></td><td> </td><td> </td><td> 
        </tr>
    </table>
/card>

card id="3" title="Events Diary">
    <p>
    <img alt="-->" localsrc="day"/>  <em>03/02/04</em>
    </p>
    <p><hr size="3" align="left" width="70%"/></p>
    <table align="left" columns="1">
        <tr><td><small><b>Name :</b></small></td></tr>
        <tr><td>  <small><i>WAP Expo 2004</i></small></td></tr>
        <tr><td><small><b>Location :</b></small></td></tr>
        <tr><td>  <small>Toronto</small></td></tr>
```

15 EVENT CARDS

To finish the Month decks you need to add cards for all the event days. Insert these below the main menu's <card> tags, using the numerical 'id' referenced by the links, and add the appropriate date heading. Next, add a single-column table with the Name and Location details.

IN DETAIL: GET YOURSELF A WAP TOOLKIT

We look at how Dreamweaver MX's useful yet limited support for WML development can be supplemented

If you've never been motivated to even consider developing WAP sites, you may be forgiven for completely bypassing Dreamweaver's provision for WML. It couldn't really be more tucked away, and although full syntax tools are present, the lack of any visual feedback can be rather frustrating. Unlike HTML, it's impossible to construct card content with drag and drop elements or preview the saved .WML files in an integrated browser.

Fortunately, a range of extensions are available from Macromedia's Exchange site, and include the renowned Nokia WML Studio. This toolkit promises to add a full GUI environment and advanced features, although MX users may experience problems running it. Aside from that, using the many downloadable standalone authoring applications and WAP emulators could be seen as a better bet. Openwave, which runs a mobile development network to support its browser technology, offers a great range of free tools and WML resources that include the SDK 6.2.2 phone simulator used in this tutorial. Everything is kept up to date with markup revisions, and superb PDF reference guides are readily available. With these, you will not only be able to establish which tags are recognised in WML, but also which localsrc images are available for use within <img> definitions. What's more, its excellent Resources section enables access to example code and even a set of servers for testing your WAP applications.

The Openwave Developer Network and SDK 6.2.2 software can be found at: developer.openwave.com ■

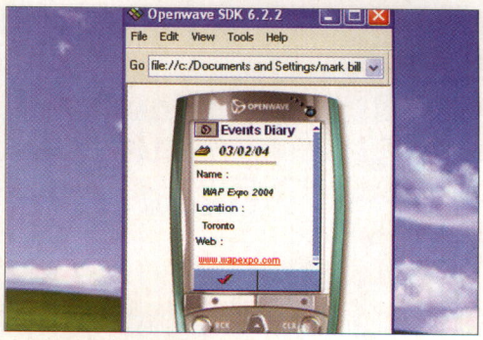
■ Openwave's home page lets you register to its development network for free WML tools and services

■ Additional browsers like the popular M3Gate are freely available online and will replicate a number of handheld devices

```
48 </card>
49
50 <card id="3" title="Events Diary">
51     <p>
52     <img alt="-->" localsrc="day"/>  <em>03/02/04</
53     </p>
54     <p><hr size="3" align="left" width="70%"/></p>
55     <table align="left" columns="1">
56         <tr><td><small><b>Name :</b></small></td></tr>
57         <tr><td>  <small><i>WAP Expo 2004</i></smal
58         <tr><td><small><b>Location :</b></small></td></tr>
59         <tr><td>  <small>Toronto</small></td></tr>
60
61         <tr><td><small><b>Web :</b></small></td></tr>
62         <tr>
63             <td> <anchor title="OK">
64             <go href=""/><small>www.wapexpo.com</small>
```

16 WEB LINK

Finally, complete the Event Listings table by including a link to an external URL. Users will need to follow this to gain more comprehensive information about each event. Follow this same procedure to create all the Event cards within each month's deck and save all the files.



17 END RESULTS

Load the events.wml deck into the browser and have a final check that all the cards display correctly. The Event Listing cards should be accessible via the monthly menus, and you should be able to move through the site using the handset buttons with no problem.

1972

Mikey and Jimmy know a hot deal when they see one.

2003

Free set-up with BT Yahoo! Broadband when you order online. A deal no one can refuse.

BT YAHOO! Broadband

A deal like that is even harder to refuse when it includes a pop-up blocker that helps deal with annoying advertising, and email virus protection that upgrades without you having to do a thing – all for just £29.99 a month.

For free activation call 0800 328 6666 or for a free modem as well sign up online at www.btyahoo.com

The way the internet was meant to be.

BT

Free modem online only (£25 for telephone orders): full price modem £80 (£70 online). Offer ends 31.03.04.
Subject to availability, survey and minimum computer specification. BT line required. Minimum 12 months, BT terms apply.

CREATE AN INTERACTIVE DIARY FOR YOUR WEB SITE

THE EXPERT: NEIL WITHNALL

Neil is a freelance Web developer who has spent years learning the technical and practical aspects of Web design. He is equally at home working in Dreamweaver as he is with the latest hand-coding technologies. Check out what Neil's capable of by popping along to www.lumencorporation.com.

Layered layouts
Use layers to construct accurate page layouts that offer a consistent appearance across all major browser platforms

Calendar grid
Use layout tables to quickly design grid-based diaries and calendars

CSS formatting
Create new Cascading Style Sheet classes that assign new formatting information to existing styles to achieve different text effects

Interactive
Create an interactive online diary that uses a compact month-to-view calendar-style format to maximise available screen space

Rollovers
Assign Swap Image Behaviors to create button rollover effects

HTML layers
Use the Set Text of Layer Behavior to write new HTML content to layers

Tables
Use table nesting to control the positioning of tables and other HTML elements inside layers

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create an interactive online diary using Dreamweaver MX

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
30 minutes

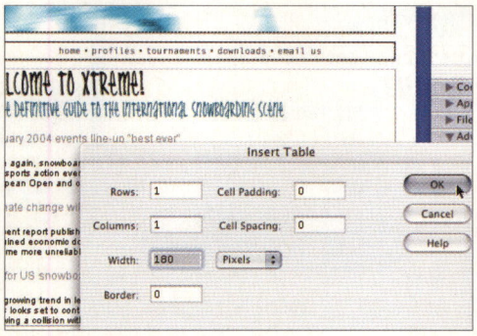
ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial files:
assets [folder]
complete [folder]
tutorial [folder]

CREATE AN INTERACTIVE DIARY FOR YOUR WEB SITE

Use tables, layers, image rollovers and JavaScript Behaviors in Dreamweaver MX to create an interactive online diary or events guide

Ultra slick, Flash-laden Web sites might catch people's eyes, but making your site genuinely useful is one of the best ways of making people come back again. An interactive online diary must rank as one of the most beneficial uses for your site. As well as helping to stimulate interest and keep visitors informed of all the latest developments, a well updated online diary or events guide helps to reflect the dynamic nature of a site, something guaranteed to ensure repeat visits!

Designing an interactive diary in a month-to-view calendar style has two distinct advantages. Firstly, the information in the diary can be presented in an intuitive and convenient format that visibly flags up important events, encouraging the user to explore the diary entries. Secondly, by minimising the amount of page space required to display the calendar you can easily incorporate this kind of feature into a navigation bar, so the diary is always onscreen and available for use. ■

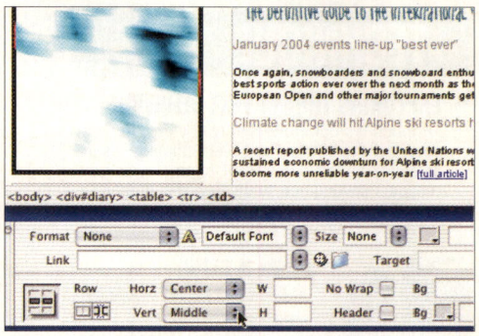


1 THE FIRST STEP

To begin, copy the Tutorial folder from the cover CD to your hard drive then open the index.htm file in Dreamweaver. With the general page layout defined, you're now ready to start designing the interactive diary. Click inside the Diary layer then insert a table using the settings shown.

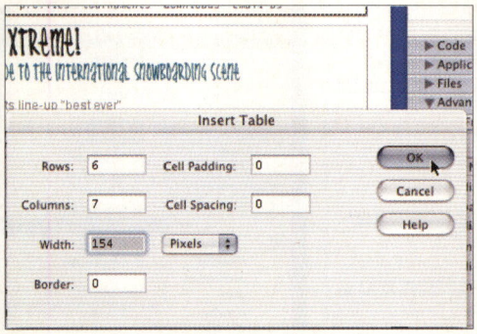
2 CHANGING TABLE PROPERTIES

Click on the edge of the table to activate its settings in the Properties Inspector, then enter '200' into the Height field. Now set the table background by clicking on the Folder icon next to the Bg Image field and selecting the diary-bg.gif image (in the Img folder).



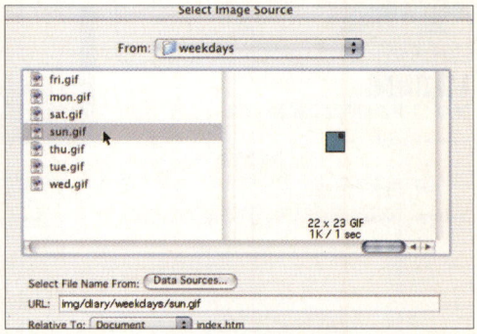
3 SETTING CELL PROPERTIES

Click inside the table to activate its cell properties then set the Horizontal and Vertical values to those shown. With these values, the table that will be used to contain the calendar graphics will be automatically positioned in the middle of the layer when it is nested inside this table.



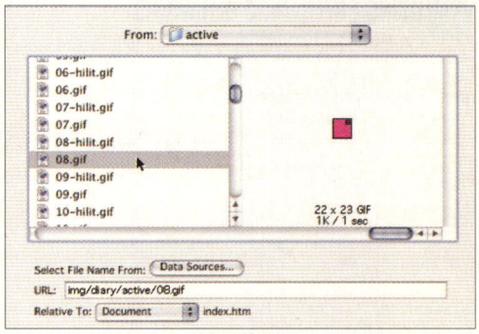
4 OUTLINE THE CALENDAR DESIGN

The visual appearance of the diary itself will follow a simple month-to-view format commonly used in printed calendars that, being based on a grid system, can easily be represented using tables. Click inside the table again, then insert a 6-row, 7-column table using the settings shown.



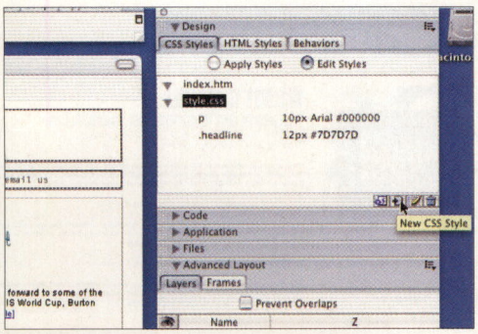
5 IMPORT THE DIARY GRAPHICS

Starting from the top left, import the weekday graphics (found in Img, Diary, Weekdays) into the first seven cells, starting with sun.gif. In the second row, import the blank.gif image (found in Inactive) into the first four cells, then import the remaining date graphics (01.gif-31.gif).



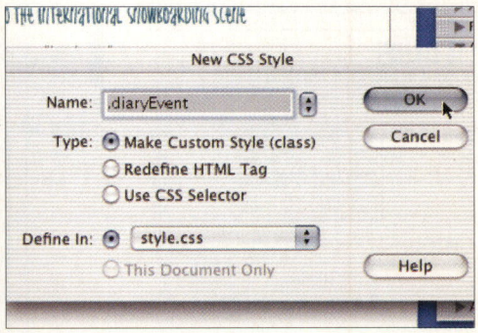
6 CHANGING THE CALENDAR GRAPHICS

For added emphasis, graphics with different background colours will be used to mark out important diary events. Click on 08.gif then change its source reference to the 08.gif file found in the Img, Diary, Active folder. Finally, enter 'day8' into the Properties Inspector.



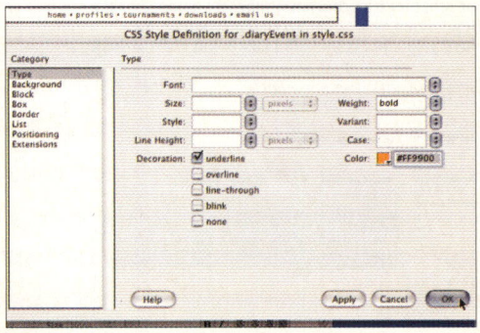
7 EDIT THE CASCADING STYLE SHEET

You're now ready to define a new font style that will give extra emphasis to event titles featured in the diary entries. Open the CSS Styles palette then activate the Edit Styles radio button and select the style.css file. Now click on the New CSS Style button as shown.



8 CREATE A NEW CLASS

Select the Make Custom Style (class) option then enter '.diaryEvent' into the Name field. Unlike styles that redefine the appearance of specific tags such as <h1> or <p>, classes can be applied to any page elements and will inherit characteristics already defined, such as font sizes or types.



9 DEFINE NEW STYLE VALUES

Because this class will be applied to text styled in paragraph (<p>) format, it will automatically inherit basic font size and type values, so it's only necessary to enter values that either create new properties (such as the font decoration) or change existing ones (such as the colour).

TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER
CREATE AN INTERACTIVE DIARY FOR YOUR WEB SITE

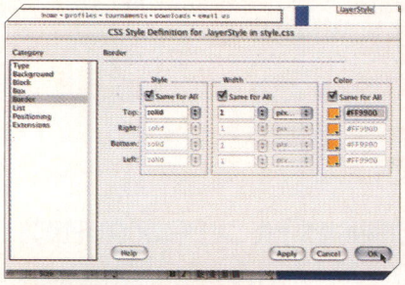
TECHNIQUE

EXPLORING THE SET TEXT BEHAVIOR

Although it's not immediately obvious, the real power of the Set Text of Layer Behavior lies in its ability to write new HTML to any layers you choose, allowing you to display new graphics, hyperlinks, tables or forms in your pages.

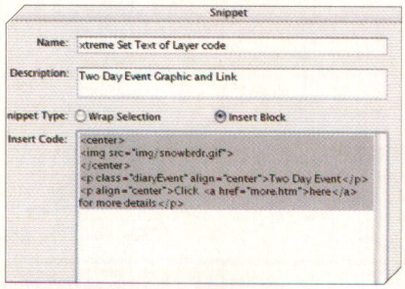
1 USING PRELOADING BEHAVIORS

It's important to remember that the images themselves may not have been downloaded when the page first loaded. Using Dreamweaver's preloading Behaviors you can make sure that these images are downloaded from the outset.



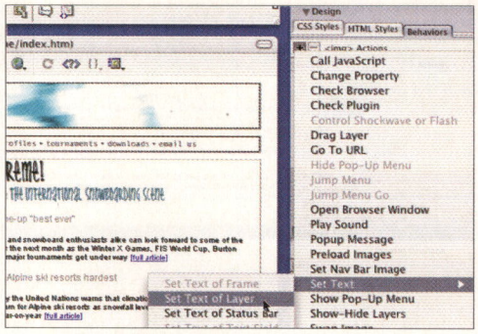
2 STYLING PAGE LAYERS

Whenever you use this Behavior, be aware that any page elements already placed in the layer will be replaced with new content, so tables or graphics used to change the appearance of the layer itself will be removed. Fortunately, the layers can be styled using Cascading Style Sheets.



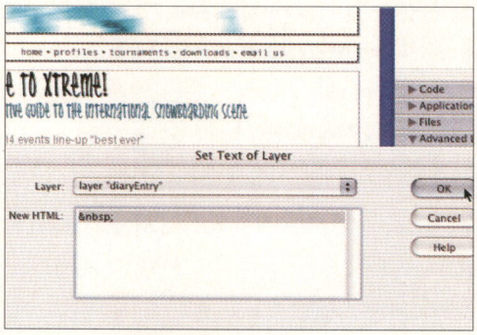
3 THE SNIPPETS LIBRARY

If your diary entries are based on a standard format, it's a good idea to use the Snippets facility to save placeholder code that can then be pasted into the Behaviors box as required, saving you effort and reducing the likelihood of typing errors.



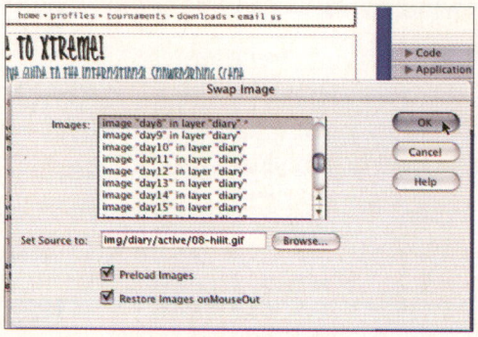
10 DISPLAYING THE DIARY ENTRY

You're now ready to create a diary entry that will be displayed whenever the user rolls over a specified event in the calendar. Make sure the Behaviors palette is open first, then select 08.gif and attach a Set Text, Set Text of Layer Behavior to it.



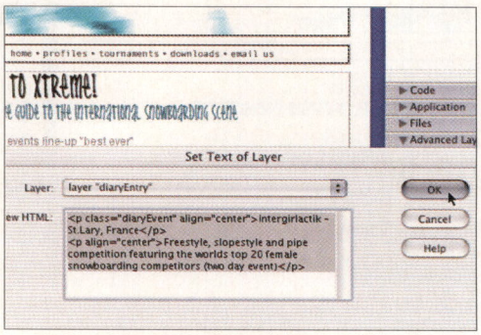
12 RESETTING THE LAYER

When confirmed, deselect the action in the Behaviors palette then attach another Set Text of Layer Behavior to the same image. The code shown ( ) overwrites the layer with a blank space, so that no entries will be displayed if the user's cursor isn't highlighting any events in the calendar.



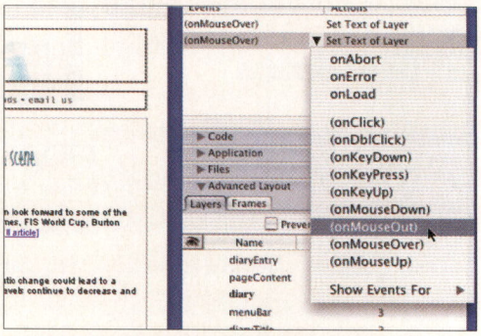
14 CREATE A ROLLOVER EFFECT

To complete the project, a rollover effect will be created that appears when the user's cursor is over specific dates. Select the 08.gif image then attach a Swap Image Behavior and set the highlight image to 08-hilit.gif. Dreamweaver assigns an extra Behavior to reset the image.



11 PASTE IN THE PAGE CODE

In the dialog box, select the diaryEntry layer then copy code from the diary.txt file (found in the Project Assets folder) into the New HTML field. The code itself will create two separate paragraphs, the first of which will display an event title styled by the class defined earlier.



13 CHANGE THE EVENT HANDLER

Because this Behavior should only be triggered when the user moves their cursor away from the date graphics, the event handler must be changed from the onMouseOver value automatically set by Dreamweaver. Click on the arrow to the left of the event name then select onMouseOut.

15 THE COMPLETED DESIGN

With the interactive diary now completed, save the page then preview the results in a browser. To learn more about the potential of the Set Text of Layer Behavior, create more new events in the calendar that incorporate images, tables, Flash files and other HTML elements into diary entries.

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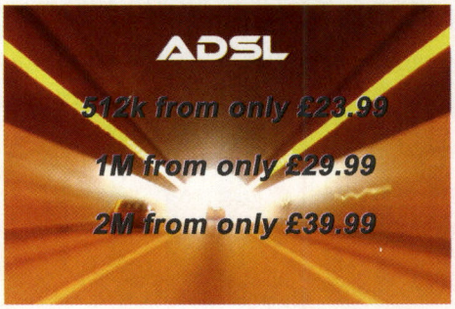
(*certain packages only)



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No restrictions

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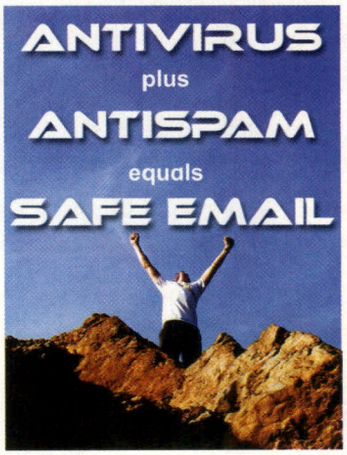
FireFly customers don't have to worry about potential support costs. Should you need to call us, it's simply a National Rate call. No premium rate 50p numbers like other ISPs !

Our server-side anti-virus measures ensure the email that reaches your inbox is free from malicious code that could damage your PC.

Not only that, our anti spam filters are 99% accurate in keeping unwanted email from reaching your inbox.



(# conditions apply, offer may be withdrawn without notice, see website for details)

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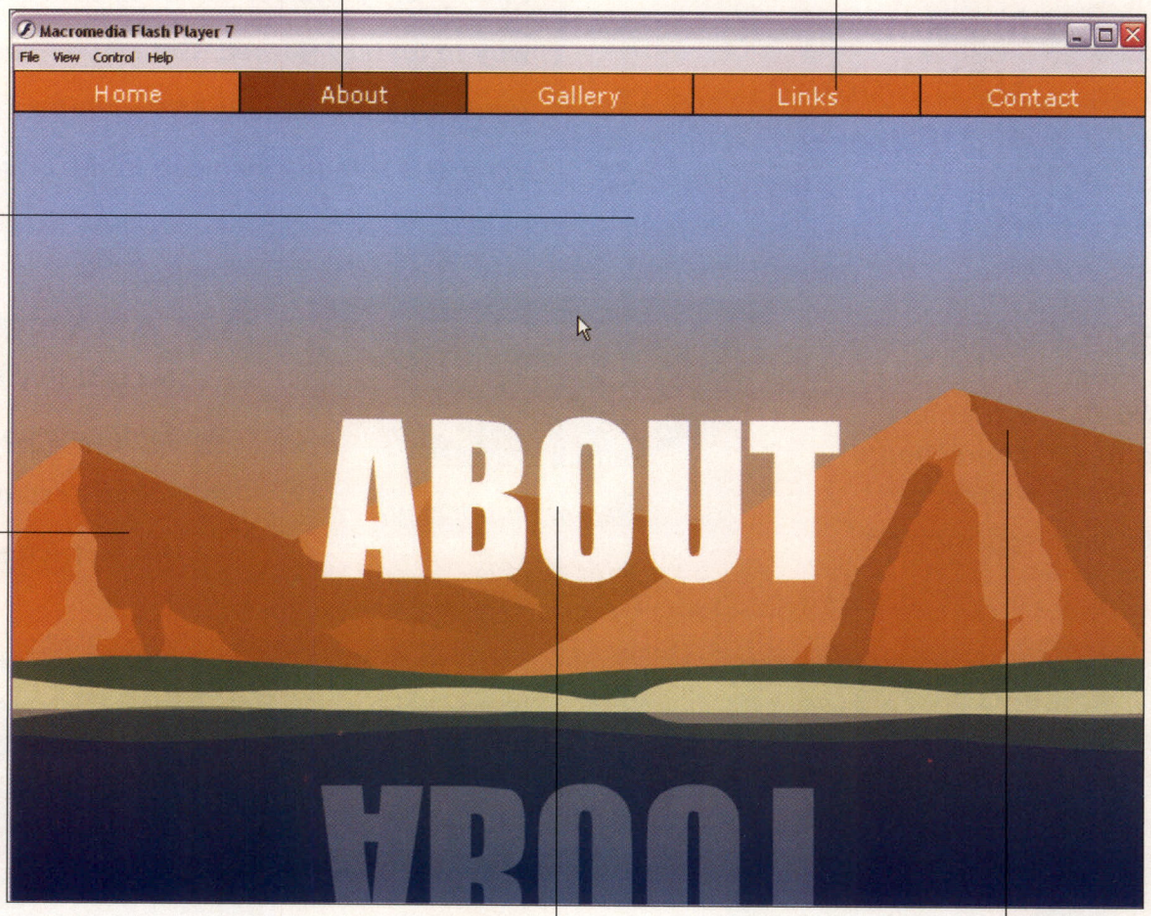
THE EXPERT: TODD YARD
Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Todd first started using Flash when he moved to New York City (via an acting course in London). He now works for Daedalus Media (**www.daedalusmedia.com**) in New York, and is also lead Flash programmer at ego 7 (**www.ego7.com**). Todd is a regular contributor to the *Friends of Ed* series of books, and specialises in Flash, Illustrator and Photoshop.

Rolling over
Rolling over a button slides the menu left or right to the appropriate section

Clicking
Clicking on a button zooms into a particular area of detail in a section



Gradients
Gradients are used in the sky, mountains and water to create a feeling of depth through colour

Parallax scrolling
Parallax scrolling, where different levels move at different rates, creates an illusion of depth

Embedding fonts
Embedding fonts allows for opacity and transformation of text fields

Lighting
Simple lighting is used on the mountains to add to the depth of the image

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a Flash navigation system incorporating a dynamic zoom effect

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
One hour

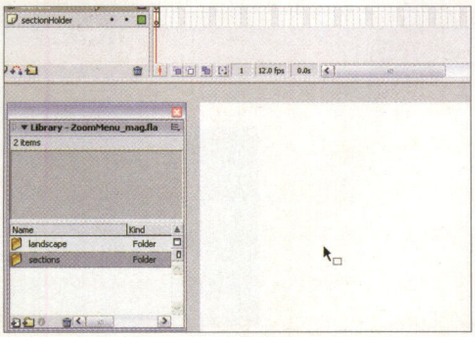
ON THE DISC
Flash/Tutorials:
ZoomMenu.fla,
ZoomManu.swf,
ZoomMenu_MX.fla
ZoomMenu_MX.swf

BUILD A 3D NAVIGATION SYSTEM IN FLASH MX

You don't have to be confined to the two dimensions imposed by print media – Flash allows you to easily simulate 3D navigation

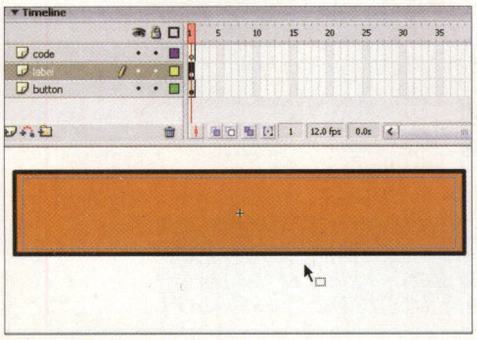
Much of the Web is still flat and lifeless, with text presented as if on a printed page. When there's a lot of information, users have to either scroll through a long block of info or click through lots of sublinks. Flash offers something different and more friendly, with its seamless integration of graphics and scripting. Instead of having flat, two-dimensional info, you can incorporate a Flash navigation system that works in three dimensions, and present more info on one page without cluttering the screen.

Creating a three-dimensional navigation doesn't necessarily require a degree in maths or a lot of knowledge of 3D techniques. All you really need to build a 3D navigation system in Flash is the ability to work with the scale of stage elements. When something is close to you, it is scaled up. When it is farther away, it is scaled down. In this tutorial we'll build a scrolling landscape that can be zoomed in and out of and panned left and right, creating a realistic illusion of 3D that is both simple to use and engaging to look at. ■



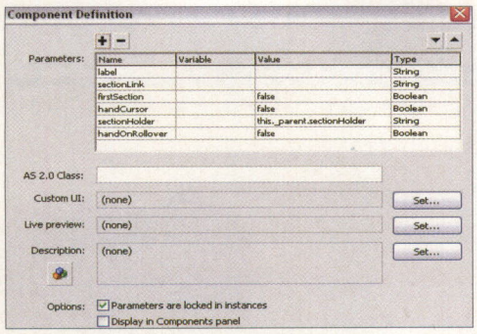
1 SETTING THE STAGE

Create a new Flash document and save it as 'ZoomMenu.fla'. Keep the default frames per second, stage dimensions and background colour. Create two layers named (top to bottom) 'buttons' and 'sectionHolder'. In the library, make two new folders named 'landscape' and 'sections'.



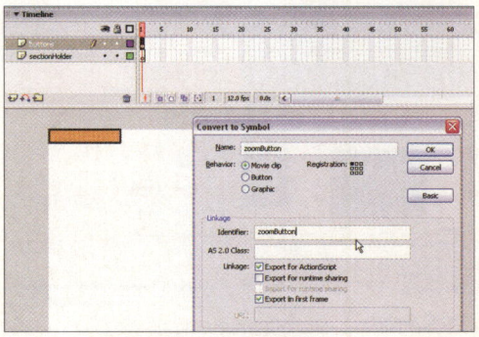
3 INNER ZOOM BUTTON

Enter Edit mode for the ZoomButton symbol and create a total of three layers named (top to bottom) 'code', 'label' and 'graphic', with the orange rectangle on the Graphic layer. On the Label layer, use the Text tool to add a dynamic text field centred on the rectangle.



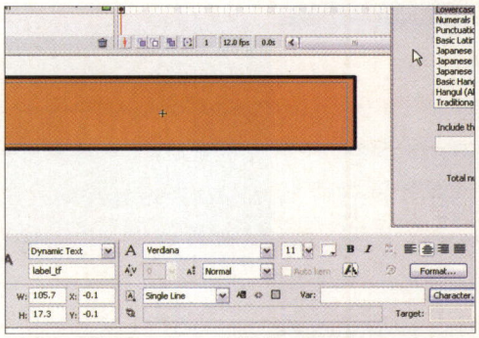
5 MAKE THE ZOOM BUTTON A COMPONENT

In the library, select the zoomButton symbol, then right-click or Command-click the symbol to open the Item submenu and select Component Definition. In the dialog, enter the above parameters and default values. These component parameters will be used to configure each zoom button.



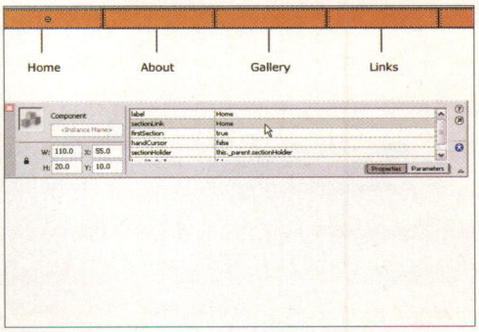
2 MAKING A ZOOM BUTTON

On the Buttons layer, draw a 110x20 pixel rectangle with a 1-pixel black outline and a fill colour of #E3882D. Hit F8 to turn it into a movie clip symbol. Name the symbol 'zoomButton' and export it for ActionScript with the identifier 'zoomButton' as well.



4 FORMATTING THE BUTTON LABEL

Select the text field created in the previous step and name it 'label_tf' in the Properties panel. Give the text field a centre alignment and an 11pt white, Verdana (or other sans serif) font. Click on the Character... button and specify uppercase and lowercase letters to be embedded in the field.



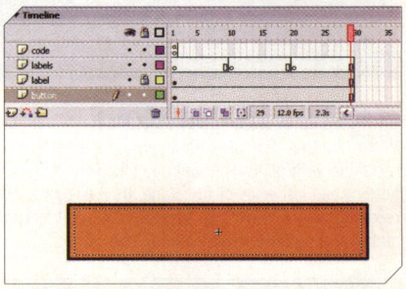
6 MULTIPLE ZOOMBUTTON INSTANCES

Add another four zoomButton instances to the Button layer of the main timeline. Align all buttons with the top of the stage and distribute them evenly across the top. Use the diagram to add the parameter value for label and sectionLink (the same value will be entered for both) to each instance.

TECHNIQUE

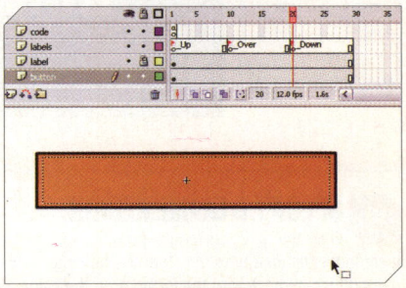
MAKING MOVIE CLIP BUTTONS

Movie clip symbols are so much more versatile than button symbols that it doesn't make sense to use the latter any more. In these steps you'll discover how easy it is to build movie clips that act just like their button counterparts, but with added movie clip functionality as well.



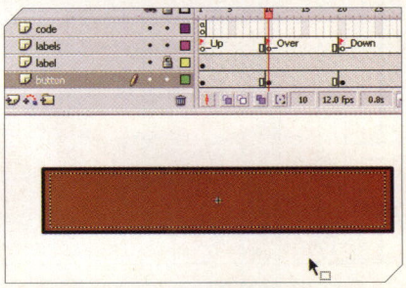
1 DEFINING STATE FRAMES

Enter Symbol Edit mode for the zoomButton symbol (or create a new symbol to experiment) and add a new layer named 'labels'. Extend all frames to frame 29 (select all of frame 29 and hit F5). Add keyframes in frames 10 and 20 of the Labels layer.



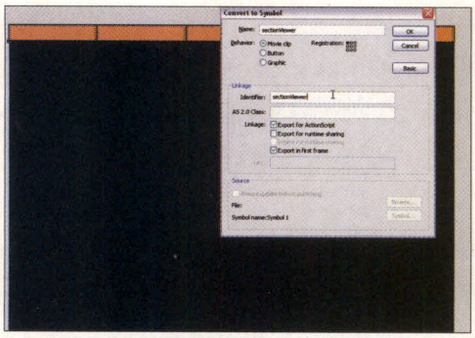
2 ADDING STATE LABELS

Select frame 1 of the Labels layer and in the Properties panel give it the label of '_Up'. Pick frame 10 of the same layer and give it the label '_Over'. Hit frame 20 and give it the label '_Down'. In frame 1, add a stop() action AFTER the #endInitClip line.



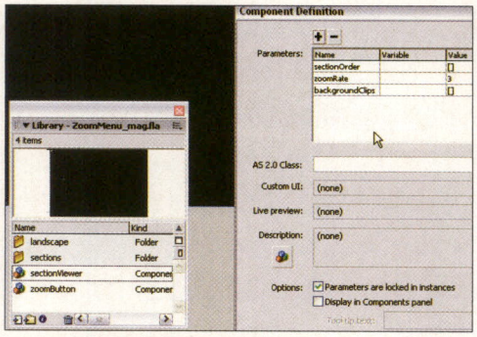
3 CHANGING STATE GRAPHICS

Now with the states defined, add keyframes on the Button graphic layer at frames 10 and 20 as well. In each of these frames, alter the button graphic's colour so it will change as the user rolls over or clicks the button. That's it! One movie clip button done!



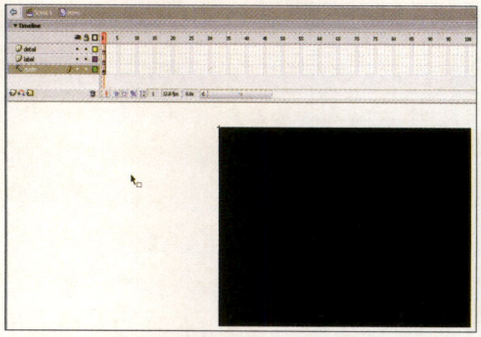
7 ADD A SECTION HOLDER

On the sectionHolder layer, draw a 550x380 pixel rectangle with no outline and any fill colour. Align it with the bottom and left sides of the stage, then use F8 to convert the rectangle into a movie clip symbol, naming it 'sectionViewer' and exporting it for ActionScript as the same.



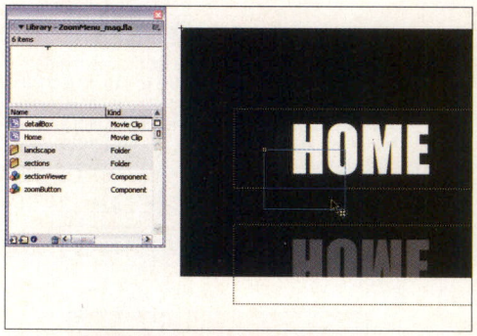
8 MAKING A COMPONENT

Right-click or Command-click the sectionViewer symbol in the library and hit Component Definition. Use the illustration to add the appropriate parameters and default values for the component. The two arrays hold identifiers for library symbols; zoomRate determines the speed of the navigation animation.



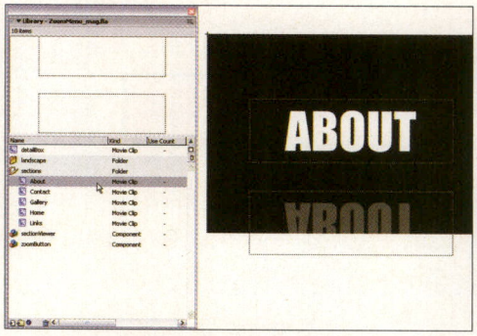
9 CREATE A SECTION TEMPLATE

Use Insert>New Symbol to create a movie clip symbol named 'Home', exported for ActionScript as 'Home'. In the symbol draw a 550x380 pixel black rectangle; align it with the top left. Name the layer with the outline 'guide' and make it a Guide layer. Create two more layers named 'detail' and 'label'.



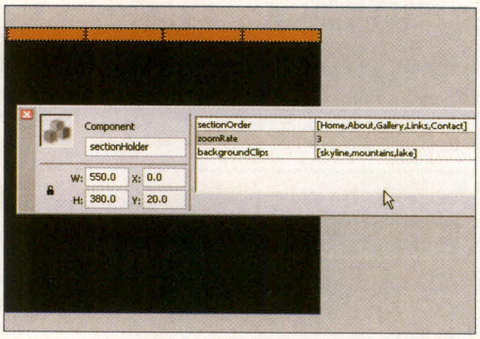
12 SPECIFY A DETAIL REGION

Copy the guide rectangle; paste it onto the Detail layer, lowering its fill opacity to 0%. Turn the rectangle into a symbol named 'detailBox'. Name the instance on the stage 'detail'; use Free Transform (holding Shift), to shrink it to specify a zoom region for the section. This is where the navigation zooms into.



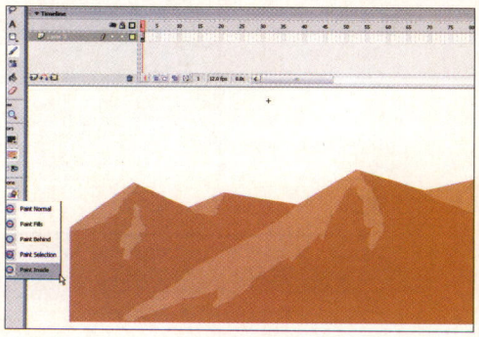
13 DUPLICATE THE SECTIONS

In the library, drag the Home symbol into the Sections folder. Copy the symbol four times, changing the names, and export identifiers to 'About', 'Gallery', 'Links' and 'Contact'. In each symbol, change the text in the label and reflection, and move the detail box to a different position at a different scale.



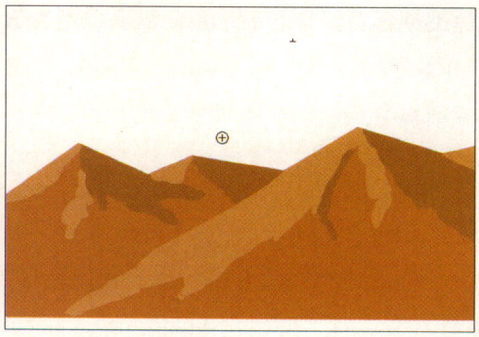
14 ADD PARAMETERS TO THE SECTION

Back on the main timeline, select the sectionViewer instance and name it 'sectionHolder' in the Properties panel. In the parameter values, add 'Home', 'About', 'Gallery', 'Links' and 'Contact' to the sectionOrder array and 'skyline', 'mountains' and 'lake' to the backgroundClips array.



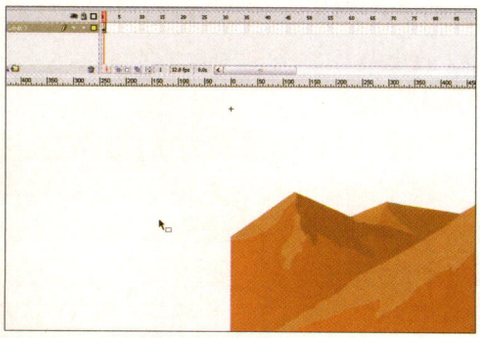
17 ADD HIGHLIGHTS TO THE MOUNTAINS

Select the Brush tool and enable the Paint Inside option in the toolbox. Set the fill colour to #DB985B and paint along the left side of the peaks in the mountain range. This implied lighting helps define depth. When using the Paint Inside option, make sure to start each stroke WITHIN the mountain shape.



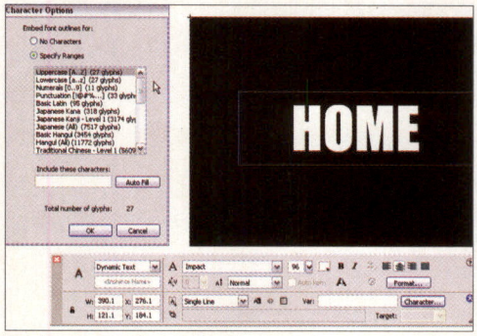
18 ADD SHADOWS TO THE MOUNTAINS

In a similar way to how the highlights were added in the previous step, use the Paint Inside option of the brush and a fill colour of #BA7637 to paint shadows along the left sides of the peaks in the mountain range. Use these shadows with the highlights to determine which peaks are closer to the viewer.



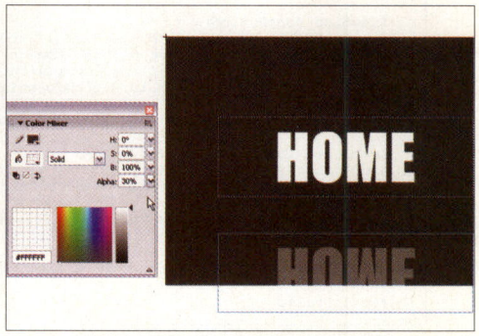
19 POSITION THE PEAKS

With the mountains more defined, alter the colours slightly for each peak to simulate difference in depth, perhaps using less saturated colours for distant peaks. Group the final mountain range and align with the left of the stage. Move the range down, so the tallest point is over 100 on the Y axis.



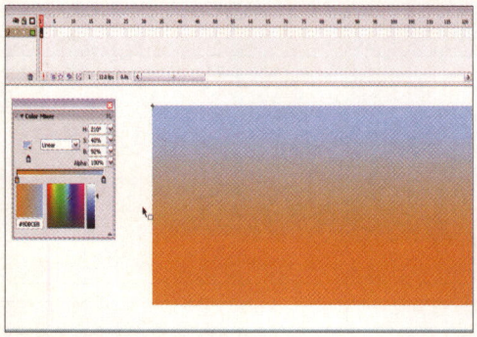
10 ADD A SECTION LABEL

On the Label layer, make a 96pt text field with centre alignment and white text. Choose a thick blocky font like Impact, and enter the text 'HOME'. Centre this text field on the stage, then in the Properties panel embed the outlines for capital letters in the field.



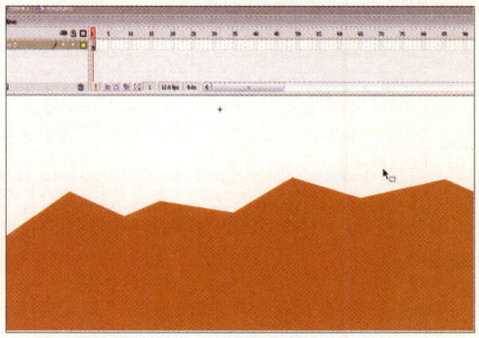
11 ADD A REFLECTION OF THE LABEL

Copy the text field and paste in place, then use Modify, Transform, Flip Vertical on the copy. Move the copy down the stage so that only a portion of it appears in the guide rectangle. Use the Colour Mixer to lower the text field's fill alpha to 30%.



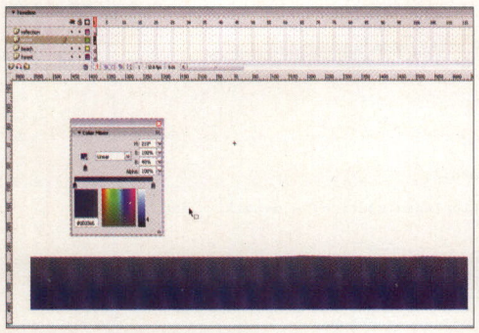
15 DRAW THE GRADIENT SKY

Create a new movie clip symbol named and exported as 'skyline'. In Symbol Edit mode, draw a 800x380 pixel rectangle and align it with the top and left of the stage. Fill the rectangle with a linear gradient going from #E3882D to #8DBCEB.



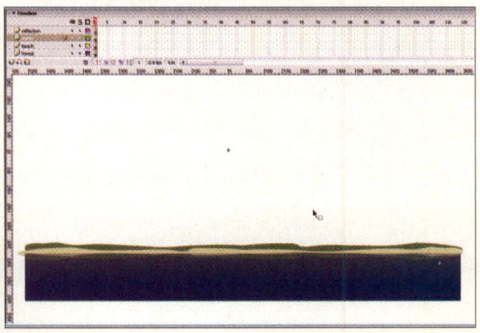
16 DRAW A MOUNTAIN RANGE

Create a new movie clip symbol named and exported as 'mountains'. In Symbol Edit mode, use the Pen tool to draw a mountain range about 1020 pixels wide and about 300 pixels high. Make it as simple or complex as you'd like and fill the shape with a solid colour #CE7E2E.



20 PAINTING A LAKE

Create a new movie clip named and exported as 'lake'. In Symbol Edit mode, make four layers named (top to bottom) 'reflection', 'water', 'beach' and 'forest'. On the Water layer, draw a 1200x130 rectangle with a blue-grey (top) to blue (bottom) linear gradient. Make the top slightly imperfect.



21 ADD A BEACH AND REFLECTIONS

On the Beach layer, scribble along the shoreline using the Brush tool and a tan fill. Do the same with green on the Forest layer. Copy both contents and paste to the Reflections layer. Turn into a symbol, flip vertically and lower its opacity. Align shapes to the left; make the shoreline 300 on the Y axis.

BOOKMARKS

SOFAKE

www.sofake.com

This site not only uses a fantastic visual zoom, but also incorporates a fun audio zoom as well, where each section blends into the next as you progress.

THEBAN MAPPING PROJECT

www.thebanmappingproject.com

For a wonderful and intuitive example of a zooming navigation, check out this site which lets you explore some famous Egyptian tombs and temples.

EXPERT ADVICE

PARALLAX SCROLLING

One way to create the illusion of 3D without resorting to complex maths is through parallax scrolling. In real life, objects closer to the viewer appear to move faster than those further away. To achieve this in Flash, the developer places graphics and animations into separate symbols and moves them at different rates depending on their proximity to the viewing plane. An example from the classic arcade days is Moon Patrol – the landscape in the distance seems to move more slowly than the foreground elements, even though the buggy moves past both at an equal rate. An instant 3D illusion, this can be achieved through manual tweening or a light bit of code.

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Now that we've created the cool imagery, let's get dirty with the necessary code:

1 This code goes inside the zoomButton symbol and sets up all the button actions. It tells the sectionHolder instance to load the proper section upon initialisation and then waits for user interaction with onRollOver or onRelease, calling methods in sectionHolder when these events occur.

```
#initclip 1

function ZoomButton() {
        this.sectionHolder = eval(this.sectionHolder);
        this.label_tf.text = this.label;
        this.sectionHolder.loadSection(this.label, this.sectionLink);
        this.onRollOver = this.zoomToSection;
        this.onRelease = this.zoomToDetail;
        this.useHandCursor = this.handOnRollover;
}
ZoomButton.prototype = new MovieClip();
ZoomButton.prototype.zoomToSection = function() {
        this.sectionHolder.zoomToSection(this.label);
};
ZoomButton.prototype.zoomToDetail = function() {
        this.sectionHolder.zoomToDetail(this.label);
};
Object.registerClass("zoomButton", ZoomButton);

#endinitclip
```

2 The rest of the code goes within the sectionViewer symbol and does all of the work in the navigation. First, a new class is defined for the sectionViewer and a movie clip is created to hold all of the sections. In addition, all the background clips are attached and placed as well. The class's prototype property is set to be a new movie clip instance, which causes the new class to inherit all properties and methods from MovieClip.

```
#initclip 0

function SectionViewer() {
        this.sections = {};
        this.width = this._width;
        this.createEmptyMovieClip("sectionHolder", this.backgroundClips.length);
        this.clips = [];
        for (var i = 0; i < this.backgroundClips.length; i++) {
                this.clips.push(this.attachMovie(this.backgroundClips[i],
this.backgroundClips[i], i));
        }
}
var p = SectionViewer.prototype = new MovieClip();
```

3 findSectionIndex returns the placement of a particular section within the order of the entire navigation, which is important when determining how far to slide left or right. loadSection is called when each button initialises and loads each section into the sectionViewer instance at the start.

```
p.findSectionIndex = function(nm) {
        for (var i in this.sectionOrder) {
                if (this.sectionOrder[i] == nm) return i;
        }
};
p.loadSection = function(sectionName, sectionLink) {
        var clip = this.sectionHolder.attachMovie(sectionLink, sectionName,
this.sectionHolder.getNextHighestDepth());
        this.sections[sectionName] = clip;
        clip._x = this.width*this.findSectionIndex(sectionName);
};
```

4 All of the animation is controlled in these three functions. When a zoomButton is rolled over, zoomToSection is called. When a zoomButton is clicked, zoomToDetail is called. In both cases, three variables are set – endX, endY and endScale. These are the position and size the sections will be animated to. The function that controls the animation is zoomSections, which moves and scales the sectionHolder and all the background clips a little at each interval call, until the destination scale and position are reached (this is checked in the if statement). For the background clips, the movement and scaling aren't as extreme as the foreground section elements, which gives the impression of depth through a concept called 'parallax scrolling'. Because the background elements don't move as far or as rapidly as the foreground elements, they appear to be further away.

```
p.zoomSections = function() {
        var s = this.sectionHolder;
        s._xscale = s._yscale -= (s._xscale - this.endScale)/this.zoomRate;
        s._x -= (s._x - this.endX)/this.zoomRate;
        s._y -= (s._y - this.endY)/this.zoomRate;
        if ((Math.abs(s._x - this.endX) < 1) && ((this.endY - s._y) < 1) && ((s._xscale - 100) <
1)) {
                clearInterval(this.zoomInterval);
                s._x = this.endX;
                s._y = this.endY;
                s._xscale = s._yscale = this.endScale;
        }
        for (var i in this.clips) {
                var c = this.clips[i];
                var adj = (Number(i)+1)*.1;
                c._xscale = c._yscale = 100 + (s._xscale-100)*adj;
                c._x = (s._x/(s._xscale/100))/(this.sectionOrder.length*this.width) * (c._width-
this.width);
                c._y = s._y*adj;
        }
        updateAfterEvent();
};
p.zoomToDetail = function(section) {
        var detail = this.sections[section].detail;
        var adj = this.width/detail._width;
        this.endX = (-this.width*this.findSectionIndex(section) - detail._x)*adj;
        this.endY = -detail._y*adj;
        this.endScale = adj*100;
        clearInterval(this.zoomInterval);
        this.zoomInterval = setInterval(this, "zoomSections", 40);
};
p.zoomToSection = function(section) {
        this.endX = -this.width*this.findSectionIndex(section);
        this.endY = 0;
        this.endScale = 100;
        clearInterval(this.zoomInterval);
        this.zoomInterval = setInterval(this, "zoomSections", 40);
};
Object.registerClass("sectionViewer", SectionViewer);
delete p;

#endinitclip
```

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*Plus registrar registration fee, see website for full details.
**Inclusive of NIC fees, renewal price £9.99 per year.
†Monthly fee, must be paid annually and excludes one-off setup fee of £9.99.
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THE EXPERT: LEE GROOMBRIDGE
Lee is the Digital Projects Manager for Highbury - Paragon, which means that he oversees the production of every magazine cover disc, and tackles both Flash and Director on a daily basis. Lee has been using Flash professionally for over five years now, and has worked with clients such as NTL, Tiscali and ITV's *Pop Idol*.

Animation
The list of thumbnails animates, depending on where your mouse is on the screen

Border
By using a border you can hide unwanted graphics from certain sections

Mask
By using a mask method in Flash we can make the scrolling list look seamless

Preview
A preview page is launched when you click on a thumbnail

Resizing
Make sure that you resize the thumbnails in an external image editor so they don't distort

Larger preview
Here are the thumbnails that you will click to launch a larger preview

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create an interactive scrollable animating thumbnail gallery

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
40 minutes

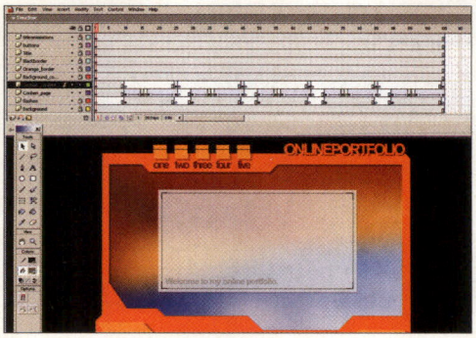
ON THE DISC
Flash/Tutorials:
thumbnail_gallery_begin [SWF & FLA]
thumbnail_gallery_finished [SWF & FLA]

PART THREE

SHOWCASE YOUR WORK IN A STUNNING WEB PORTFOLIO

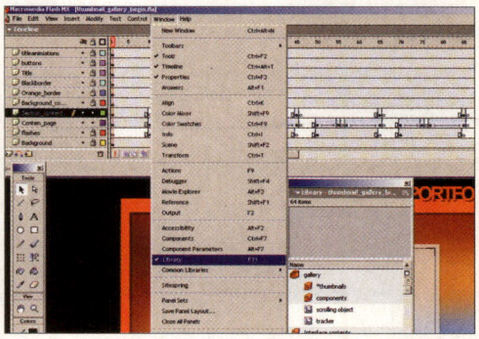
Discover how by using Flash MX you can create an animating scrollable gallery to showcase your portfolio and preview thumbnails

Among its many talents, Flash is a great tool for anyone wishing to showcase their work on the Web. Let's face it – there are few applications better at displaying information in an eye-catching way. In this tutorial we're going to make a thumbnail gallery with a difference – the thumbnails will be presented in the format of a horizontal scrolling list. This list will scroll at varying speeds and directions according to where your cursor is on the screen. By clicking on a selected thumbnail the reader will gain access to a larger preview of whatever it is you want to showcase. This type of system could be used by a student who's creating a portfolio of their work or even by a photographer who wishes to showcase and sell pictures. As you'll see, you will be linking to external HTML pages by selecting a thumbnail. With this in mind, a Web designer could easily use this gallery as a menu system in its own right. To work through this tutorial you'll need to know how to use movie clips and enter ActionScript. ■



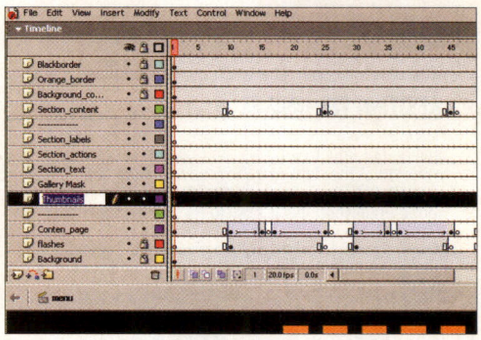
1 GETTING FAMILIAR

The first thing to do is open up a prepared FLA file called 'Thumbnail_gallery_begin.fla', which you'll find on the cover CD. Once opened you will see a whole site laid out. We will be adding content to the Portfolio section.



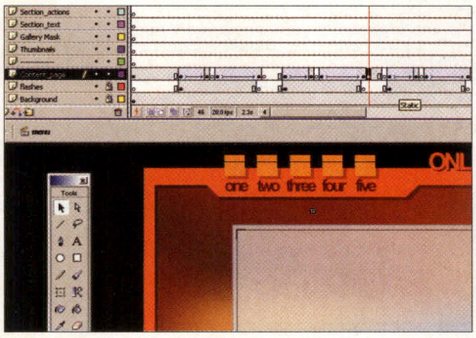
2 GETTING STARTED

Now you have the file open, open up the library (Control & L) and you'll see a folder called 'Gallery' inside it. All the components you need to do this tutorial have been prepared for you, so you can concentrate on making the menu rather than creating graphics.



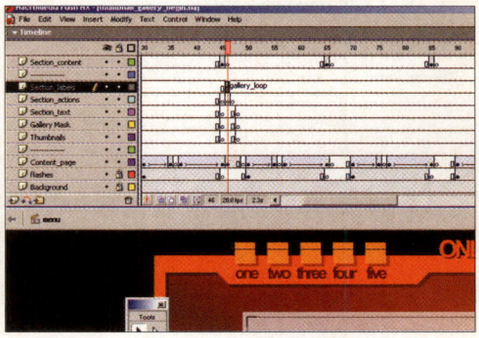
3 SETTING UP THE LAYERS

In order to put this gallery in, let's create the layers for it to go into. Add seven layers into the timeline by selecting the Contents_page layer and then Insert>Layer. Name the layers as in the screenshot by double-clicking on their names in the timeline.



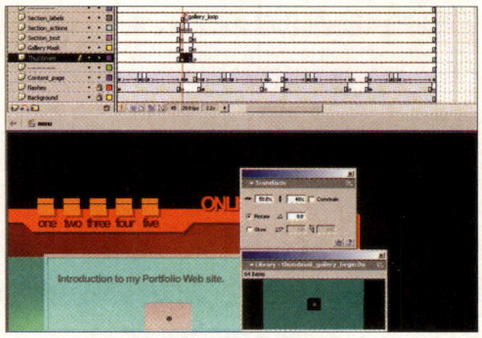
4 ALTERING EXISTING CONTENT

Before we add any new content to the stage, we need to alter a few things with existing content so the gallery will work. On the Main_Titles layer drag the blank keyframe on frame 46 to frame 48. On layer 'Content_Page' copy frame 45 and drag it out across frame 46 to 48.



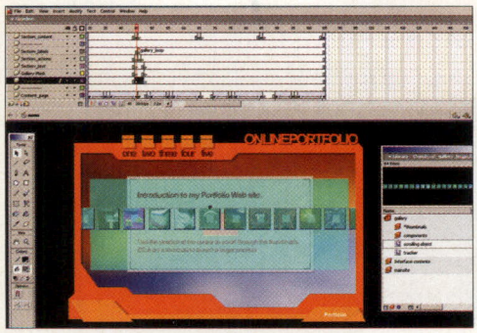
5 SET UP THE NEW KEYFRAMES

Next, set up the keyframes for the new content. On the Section_Text, Gallery Mask and Thumbnails layers add keyframes to frames 45 and 48. On the Section_Actions layer add keyframes to 45, 46 and 47. On the Sections_Labels layer add a keyframe to 46 and framelabel it 'gallery_loop'.



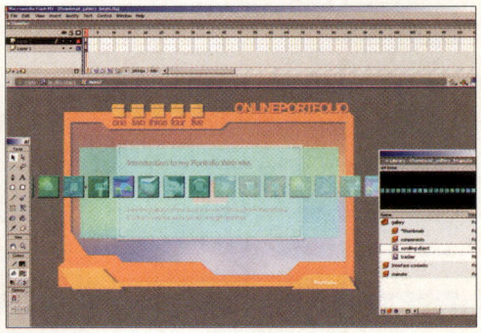
6 ADD THE TRACKER

Now let's get our hands dirty and start to make the menu. With the library open drag the Tracker movie clip onto the Thumbnails layer on frame 45. Transform the dimensions (Control & T) to X=50% Y=40%. Give the movie clip an instance called 'tracker' from the Properties panel.



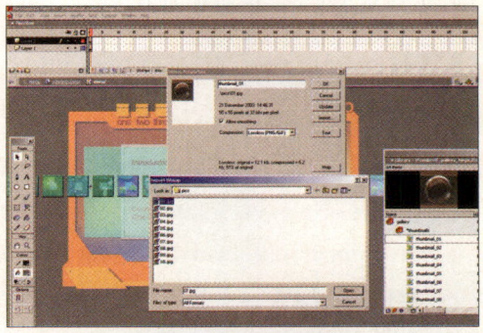
7 ADD THE THUMBNAILS

The next step is to put the movie clip that represents the scrolling thumbnail menu onto the stage. Drag the Scrolling Object from the library onto the Thumbnails layer on frame 45. Give this movie clip an instance name of 'scrollingobject'. Give it a positional Y value of 300.



8 EXPLORING THE SYMBOLS

If you select the Scrolling Object and select Edit>Edit In Place you will see that this movie clip contains two instances of another graphic symbol called 'Menu'. Hit Edit in Place again. You will see that this symbol contains the thumbnails on one layer and button symbols on another.



9 CHANGING A THUMBNAIL

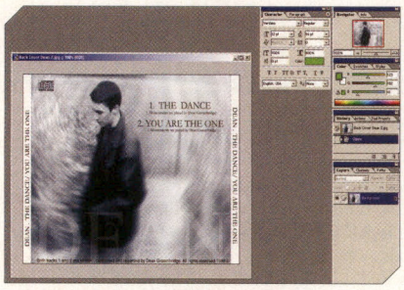
To get your own pictures into this menu, start with an image sized at 55 pixels square. Open the library and right-click the thumbnail you want to change. Choose Properties and Import from the pop-up. Now browse to your new image and hit Open. The thumbnail will automatically update on the stage.

TUTORIAL: FLASH
SHOWCASE YOUR WORK IN A STUNNING WEB PORTFOLIO

TECHNIQUE

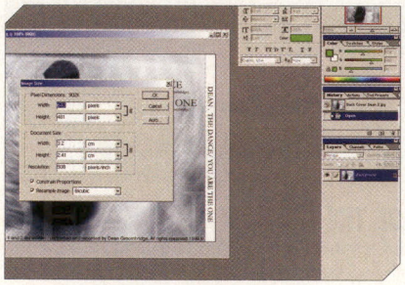
RESIZING THE IMAGES

Flash can scale vector graphics without loss of quality, but imported pixels can't do this. If not imported at the right size they may be distorted once an SWF movie is produced . By using Adobe Photoshop this is how to resize an image.



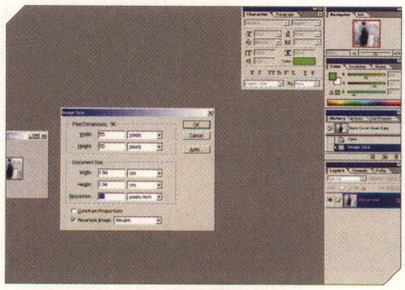
1 OPEN THE PICTURE FOR RESIZING

When creating the menu in this tutorial, you will have to eventually resize an image to the scale needed for the scrolling preview buttons. This is simple using Adobe Photoshop. First open the image you wish to resize.



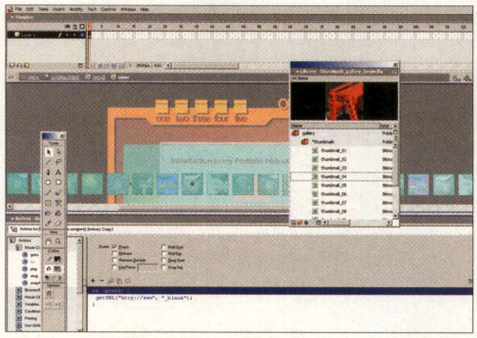
2 THE IMAGE PROPERTIES WINDOW

In this project we need the image to be 55 pixels square. To do this you have two options: to crop the image or to scale the image. In this case we will scale. Start by selecting Image, Image Size from the menu. A pop-up will appear.



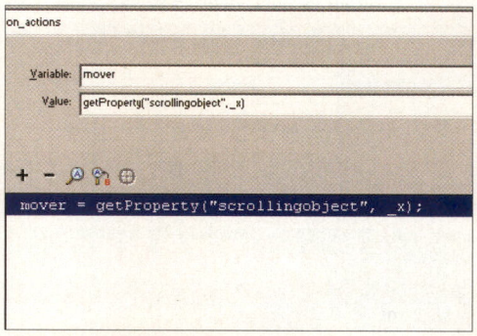
3 RESIZE TO CORRECT SIZE

We need to change three properties of the image, but first ensure the Constrain Proportions option is unchecked. Now change the resolution to 72 pixels/inch, and the pixel dimensions to 55 width and 55 height. Click OK and see your image resize.



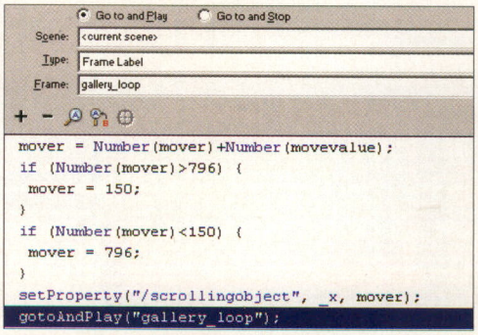
10 LINKING TO A PREVIEW

This is how to link the thumbnails to a preview HTML page. Inside the menu2 movie clip, select a button then Edit in Place. If you now select a single button and open the Actions panel, you will see that the button has some ActionScript attached.



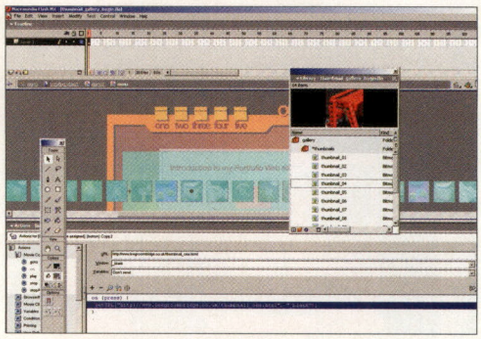
13 FRAME 45 SCRIPT

Open the Actions panel and select Actions, Variables, Set Variable from the folders on the left-hand side of the panel. In the main window enter mover in the Variables field and getProperty("scrollingobject", _x) in the Value field with 'Expression' checked.



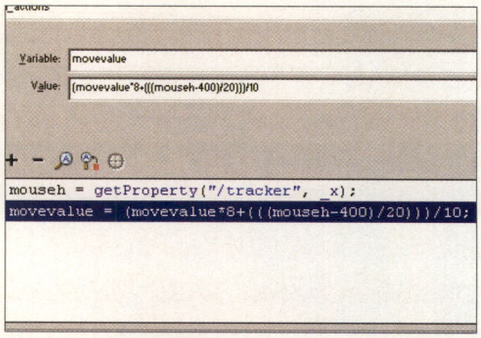
16 FRAME 47 SCRIPT CONTINUED

Next, select Actions, Movie Clip Control, setProperty. In the Property field select '_x(X position). In the Target field enter /scrollingobject, and in the Value field, mover. Now select Actions, Movie Control, goto and set the values to gotoandPlay, current frame, framelabel and gallery_loop.



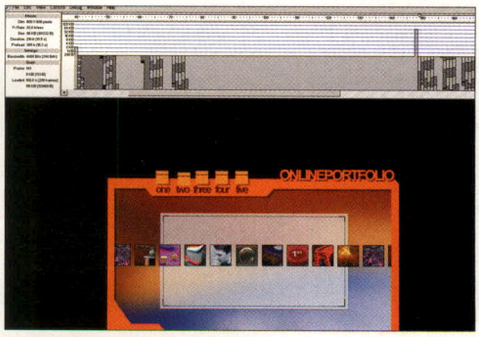
11 CUSTOMISING THE LINK

The ActionScript attached to this button represents the HTML page this thumbnail will launch when pressed. To customise the button's links select the Get URL line of code from the Actions panel and enter your personal URL links in the field that appears.



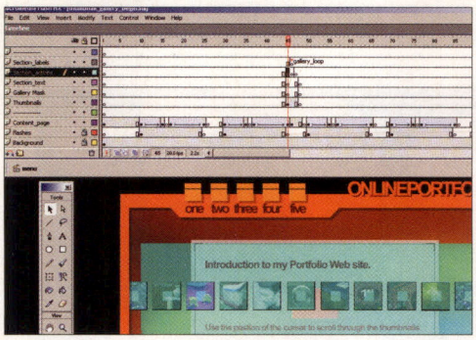
14 FRAME 46 SCRIPT

Now select frame 46 in the Section_Actions layer and set two more variables in the same way as in step 13 (ie select Actions, Variables, Set Variable): Mouseh = getProperty("/tracker", _x) and Movevalue = (movevalue*8+(((mouseh-400)/20)))/10.



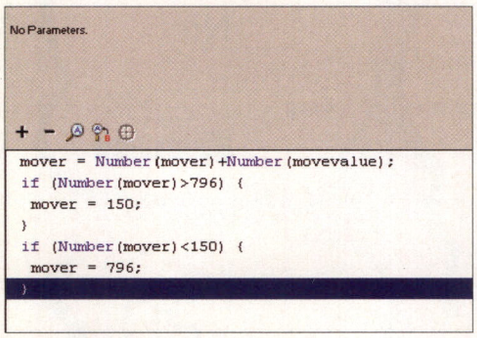
17 SCRIPTING OVER

If you select Control>Test Movie you will see a preview of what you have made so far. Select TWO from the menu and see your thumbnails scroll. You will notice that the list overlaps the edge of its target area. We will now add a mask to finish the menu off.



12 ADDING THE MAIN SCRIPTS

You have now learnt how to customise the thumbnails and links, so let's get the menu scrolling. Go back to the main timeline by selecting Edit>Edit Document. Now select frame 45 in the Section_Actions. This is where we will start adding your scripting.



15 FRAME 47 SCRIPT

The script will be split over the next few steps. Set a variable mover = Number(mover)+Number(movevalue). Add an if statement by via Actions, Conditions/Loops, If. Add the condition Number(mover)>796; set the variable mover = 150. Add mover = Number(mover)<150; add variable mover = 796.

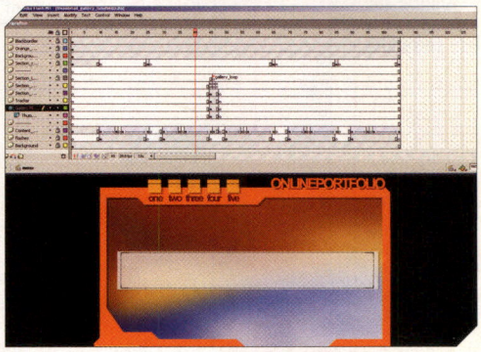
IN DETAIL: THE CONCLUSION

With a bit of experimentation, you'll find that you can achieve more than one effect...

Now you've completed the Gallery section, you can see how you could easily adapt it to your Web sites. But if you do try to incorporate it, remember that the numbers in the ActionScript will have to be altered to fit your size of site. Also, by experimenting and changing the values of the numbers in the ActionScript you will find there's more than one effect that can be achieved with this tutorial.

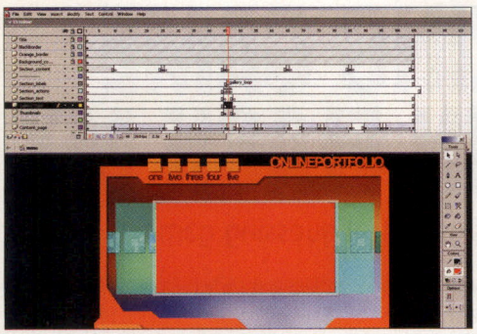
Also, you'll notice that the buttons in the Scrolling Preview menu launch external Web pages. The reason is so you can see that you can either place a picture (ie JPEG or GIF) file on these links or use these links to go to other Flash sites or animations. Alternatively, if you were using this tutorial to create a CD-ROM portfolio you could remove the 'http://www' from the links and navigate the buttons to pages/pictures on the disc itself.

This is the third and final part of the tutorial. If you've been following this project since issue 88 of *Practical Internet Web Designer*, you should have picked up a few neat little tricks along the way. You will have learnt how to animate an interface with the use of an intro. You will also have learnt how to create an interactive menu that uses the 'Tell target' function within the ActionScripting to control individual animations, as well as eventually creating an all-animating mini site that contains a scrolling interactive portfolio gallery section. However, you don't have to stop here – you can add many more features to this shell of a site. Perhaps you could incorporate other tutorials from this or future issues to build an ultimate Web site resource for yourself! ■



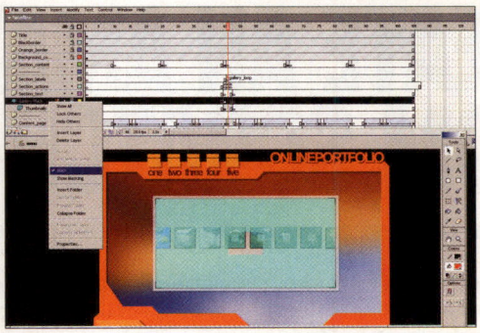
■ We started with a fairly basic, if attractive, interface design and slowly built it up over the past three months...

■ ...now we not only have a cool interface to speak of, but also an interactive porftolio that works in an interesting way



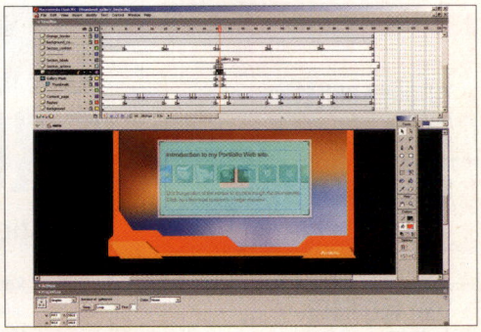
18 ADDING THE MASK

The first step is to select frame 45 on the Gallery_Mask layer. Now with the Rectangle tool selected (press R) draw a shape over the area that you want the menu to appear in. Any colour can be used – the colour of a mask does not affect how it works.



19 CONVERTING TO MASK LAYER

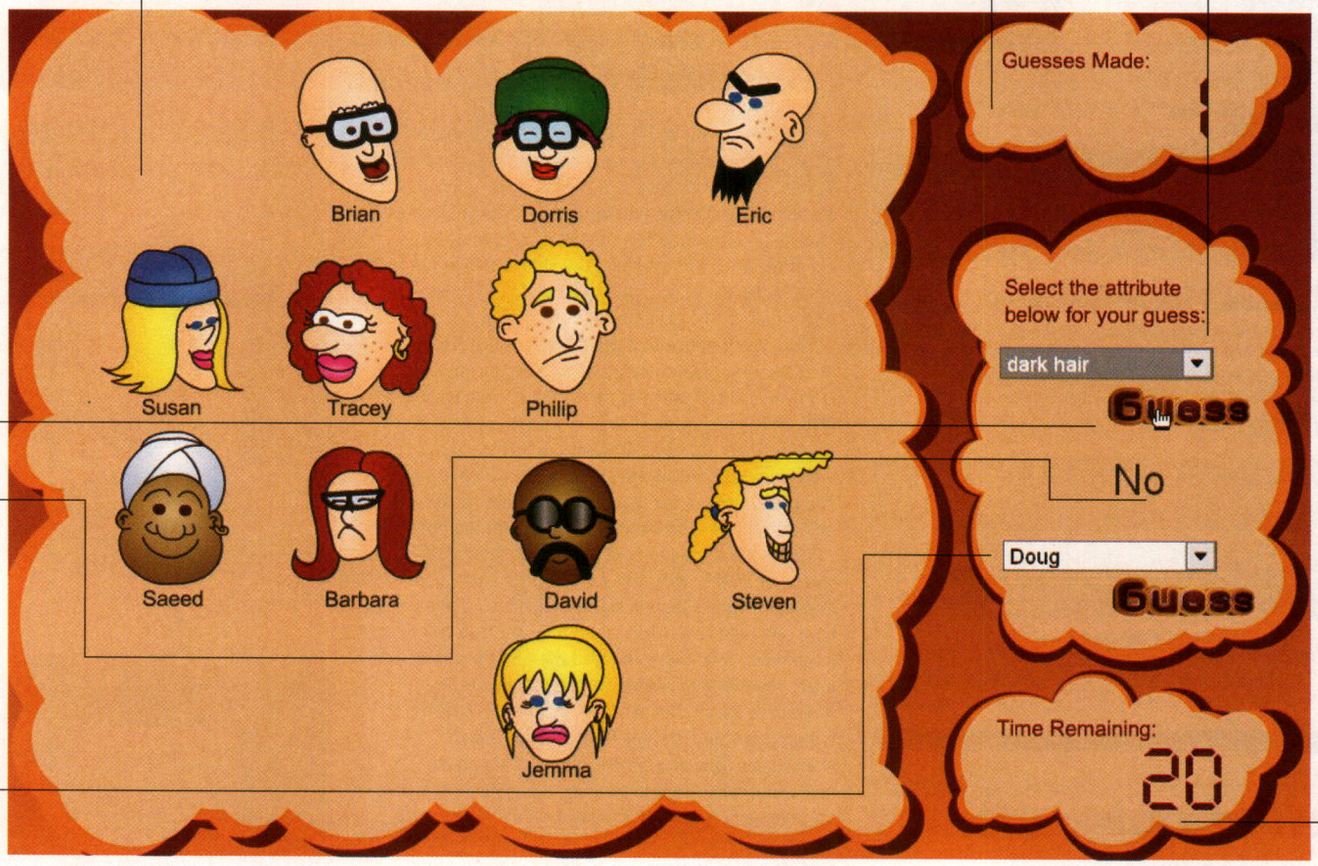
Now your shape has been drawn, you can convert it to a Mask layer by selecting the Gallery_Mask layer, right-clicking and selecting Mask from the drop-down menu. You will see it locks the layer directly below it – in this case the Thumbnails layer.



20 FINISHING TOUCH

The last touch is to add the text for the section. First cut the content from frame 45 of the Section_Content layer and paste it into frame 45 of the Section_Text layer. You can now leave it like this or convert it to a movie clip and animate a fade-in. It's up to you!

THE EXPERT: MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM
Mark teaches on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, and has been a regular contributor to *Practical Internet Web Designer* for many issues. Although Mark comes from a print background – he's a former designer of *PI* – he is now much more involved in Web design technology, and specialises in everything from Flash through to 3D graphics and PHP.



Recorded
Guesses are recorded so you know how quickly you have scored

Race against time
There's only 20 seconds on the clock, so it's a race against time

Heads
The heads are on display so that you can see what characteristics are left as you guess

Drop menu
A drop menu allows you to choose characteristics

Button
Click the Guess button to submit the guess to the computer

Correct?
The computer will tell you if your selection is correct and remove the appropriate heads

Guess
Guess the name of the character outright at any point during the game

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a graphical guessing game with Flash MX

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
2-3 hours

ON THE DISC
Flash gaming/ Tutorial files: finished game [folder], FLA, SWF, EPS, text and T3D files

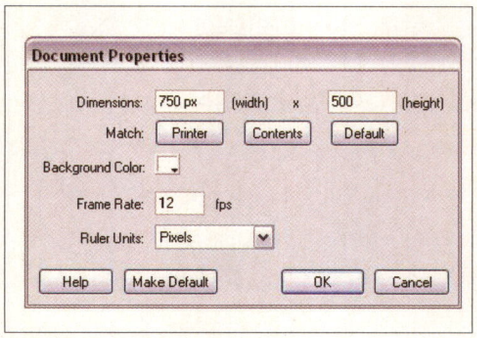
CREATE AN AMAZING GAME FROM SCRATCH IN FLASH MX

Add sticky content to your site by building a cool graphical guessing game

Racking up a site full of happy punters is never easy, and more often than not it's the strangest of additions that makes the sticky difference. Creating a Flash game is one of the best ways of achieving this, and it also lets you flex your Flash muscles like you've never done before.

In this tutorial, we're going to create a cool guessing game similar to the Guess Who board game you might have played in your youth. Although the game itself is relatively simple, the ActionScript that powers it is far from straightforward. You'll learn how to use arrays and variables and a whole lot more – but more importantly, you'll discover a few tricks that will help you make your visitors remember your site the next time they boot up their browser on the lookout for a cool new Web experience.

We'll show you how to create the all-important faces using Flash's drawing tools, while the code will use arrays to contain all the information about the characters, with some search scripts to work the game – these concepts have been fully explained within the 'In Detail' sections. ■

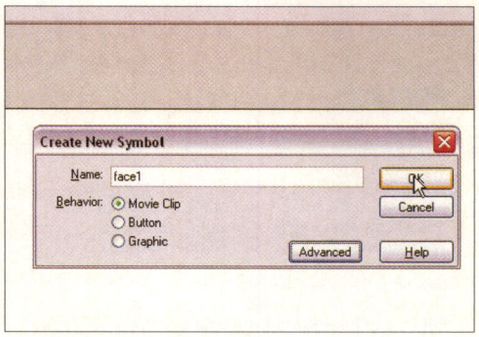


1 STARTING THE GAME

Open Flash MX and create a new document. Click on the Size button in the Properties palette and change the document size to 750 by 500 pixels then click OK. Press Control & L on the keyboard to open the Library palette.

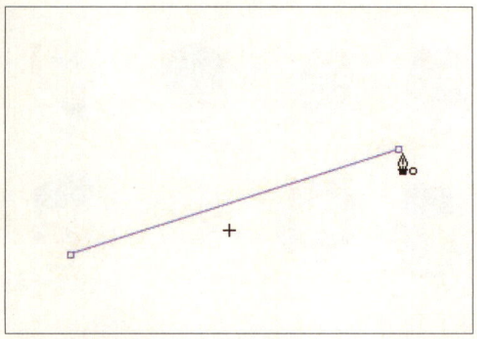
2 CREATE THE CHARACTERS

We need to create characters for the game. It's easier to do this on paper so we don't waste too much time drawing on the computer. They need to have some overlapping characteristics, yet each must contain a unique combination of those characteristics.



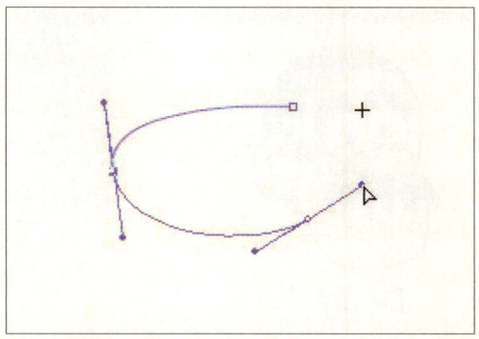
3 CREATE A MOVIE CLIP

Press either Control & F8 or click the Plus icon at the bottom of the library to create a new symbol. Make this symbol's behaviour a movie clip, name it 'face1' and click OK. We now need to draw our first character in this movie clip.



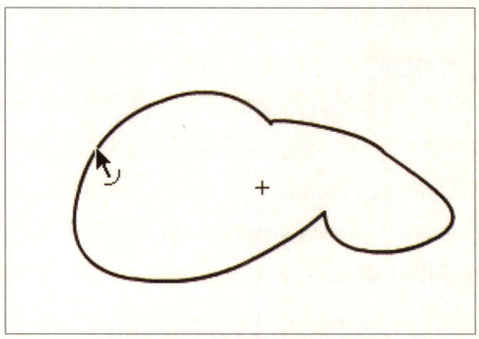
4 USING THE PEN TOOL

The standard way to draw in vector packages is to use the Pen tool, or the Bezier Curve tool as it is often called. Select this from the toolbar and have a practice with it. If you click once you will add a point; click again and you'll add another point to create a straight line.



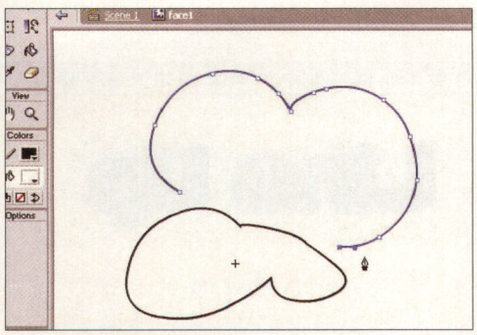
5 DRAWING CURVES

Remove the straight line, select the Pen tool again and now click and drag. Two handles should appear. Click and drag again and a curve should appear between the points. Do this a third time and an illustration is begun.



6 CONTINUE WITH THE CURVES

Continue drawing until you have a shape that resembles the one shown above. You can amend what you have done by selecting the white Pointer tool to amend the Beziers, or the black Pointer tool. If you hold this close to the edge so a little curve appears, it allows the line to be moved.

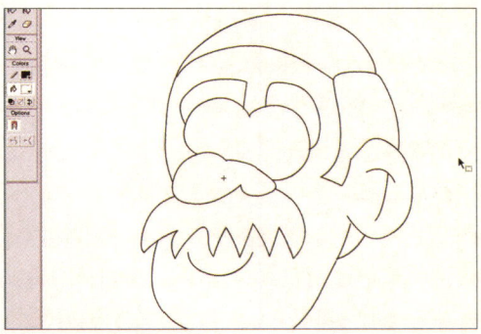


7 ADD SOME EYES

You may not realise it but you have just drawn a nose. Now, using the same technique draw some eyes. The tip here is to draw them slightly separated, and then change to the Arrow tool to pick the line up and position it touching the nose.

8 CONTINUE ADDING FEATURES

It will probably take a while, but add the moustache, the mouth and the ear to the illustration with the Pen tool, and you will probably see the face begin to take shape. Remember, if you go wrong you can always amend the lines later.



9 FINISH THE FACE

Now add the chin, hair and eyebrows to the image to complete the face. Once this is done we can start to add colour to the image. Make sure all the lines join up so you can add fill colours to the image; gaps can cause problems so try to avoid them.

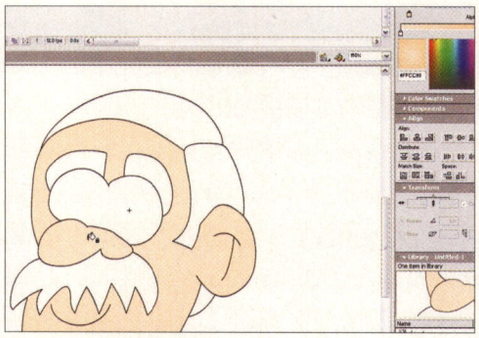
GEEK SPEAK

MOVIE CLIP
A movie clip is a symbol in the Flash library. It is important to differentiate between a movie clip and a graphic, as you would think that one is an animation (the movie clip) while the other is a static image (the graphic). This isn't necessarily true, because graphics can be animations and movie clips can be static, as is the case in the tutorial. The main difference between them happens to be that a movie clip can later be given an instance name, which a graphic cannot. This means that movie clips can be controlled by the ActionScript code.

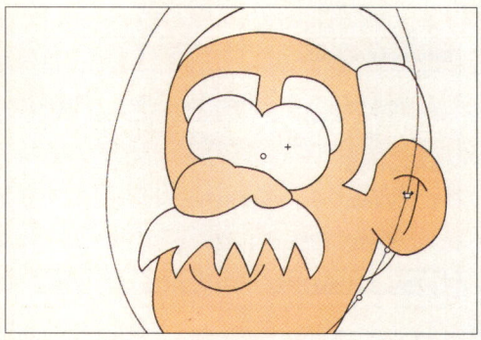
BEZIER CURVES
These are special vector mathematical points that allow two points to be linked by a curve. These points have handles which are dragged, and these handles point the curve in the direction they are to go. Bezier curves are an accurate way to draw lines because they can be continually edited until they look right.

SYMBOL
A symbol is any item found in the library. They can be added to the stage many times, with only the first placement increasing the file size, and so are bandwidth-friendly to add multiple instances of the symbol to the stage. Symbols can be movie clips, buttons or graphics created in Flash or can be external files such as bitmap images or sounds.

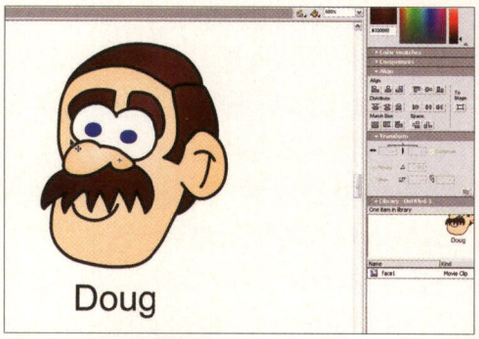
GRADIENT
A gradient allows two different colours to blend. Other hues can also be added, so multiple colours can be blended and complex shades built up. The gradient can be applied as either a radial or linear gradient, and can be easily controlled using the Fill Transform tool, which can change the angle and shape of the gradient.



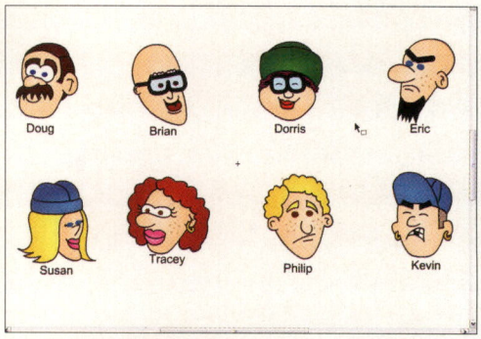
10 ADDING COLOUR
In the Colour Mixer palette choose Radial as the fill, click on the first colour and change it to #FFEAD5. Now click on the second colour and change it to #FFCC99. Change to the Bucket tool and click inside the face and nose to apply.



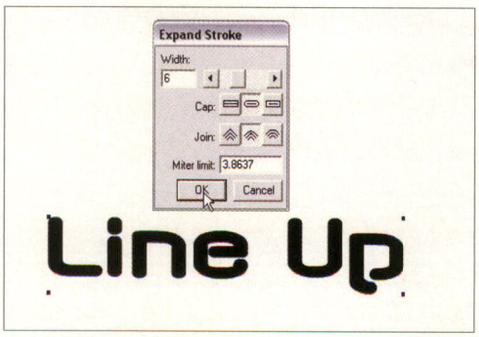
11 AMEND THE BLEND
Click on the Fill Transform tool and drag the edge handle in to change the shape and size of the fill. There is also a Rotate which will change the angle of the fill. You can drag the centre around as well, which should give a nice gradient for the face.



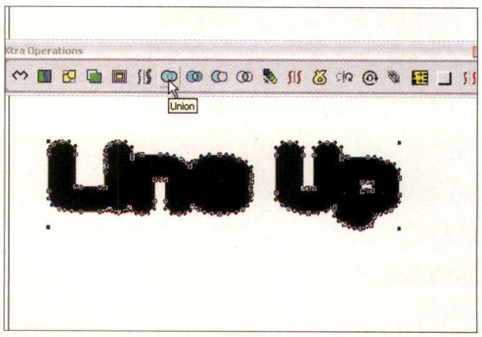
14 ADD A NAME
The final step of this is to use the Text tool to add the name 'Doug' to the bottom of the head in 12-pixel, Arial text. One down – only another fifteen to go! This will undoubtedly be the most time-consuming part of the tutorial.



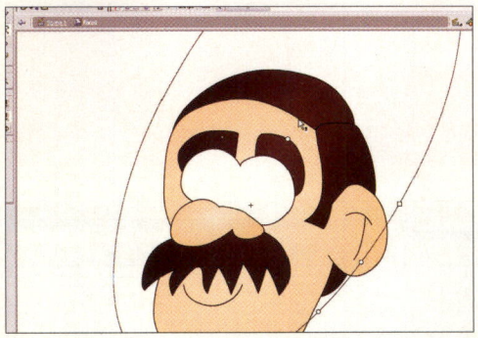
15 A NEW SYMBOL
Use the above screenshot as a guide to create the symbols for face2 to face8 in the library. If you have a graphics tablet, you will probably find that using that is easier. You can use the Pencil tool with it, as this gives good results and can smooth the lines.



18 EXPAND THE PATH
From the Text menu choose Convert To Paths so the text becomes a graphic. With the text still selected, click on the Modify menu and Alter Path and Expand Stroke. Change the stroke to 6 and click the two centre buttons for Cap and Join, then click OK.

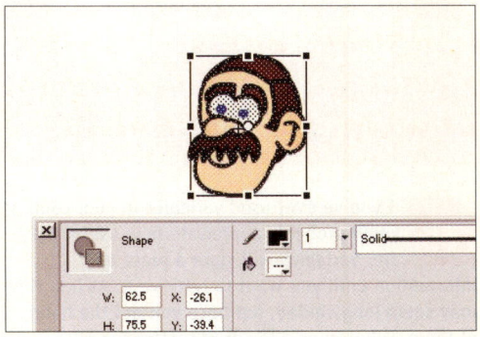


19 COMBINE THE PATH
Click off the text and change to the white Pointer tool, then drag around the text so that it is selected. From the Xtra Operations toolbar choose Union to make just one path. Now from the File menu choose Export and use Encapsulated Postscript (eps).



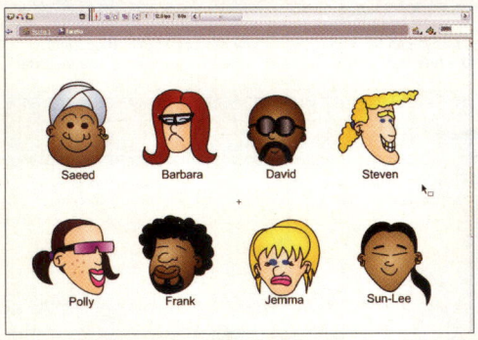
12 A RADIAL BLEND FOR THE HAIR

Change the first colour of the blend in the Mixer palette to #663333 and now change the second colour to #330000. Use the Paint Bucket to add to the hair, eyebrows and moustache, then use the Fill Transform to change the shape.



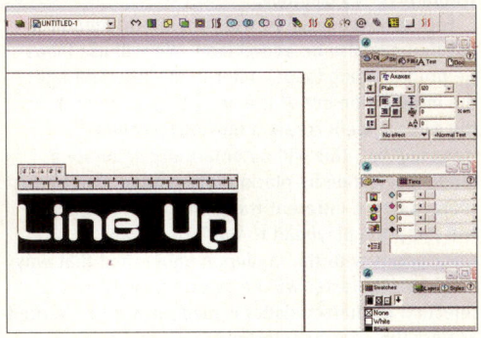
13 FINISH THE EYES

Add a couple of ovals for the eyes, which you can squash with the Transform tool, then fill the rest of the eyes using a white colour. Select the entire head now and resize it with the Transform tool so that the dimensions are 62.5 pixels wide and 75.5 pixels high.



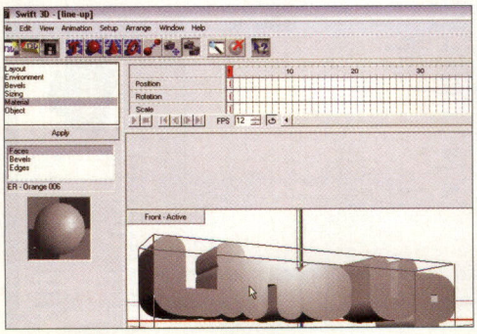
16 FINISH THE REMAINING HEADS

The heads shown in the screenshot above are for the library symbols face9 through to face16 which concludes all the heads required for the game. The next part of the tutorial will create the elements needed for the text headings.



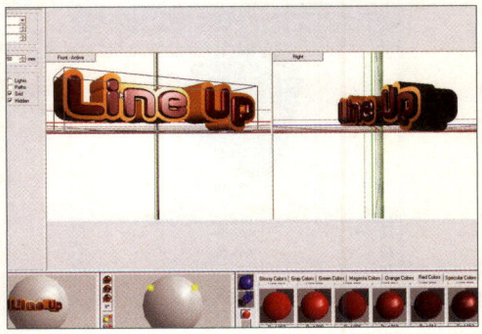
17 A LITTLE FREEHAND

Save your Flash document as 'Line-up.fla' and if you have Freehand, open it; don't worry if you haven't as we'll supply the relevant files on the CD. Type the words 'Line Up' on the screen as shown and change the font size to 120pt.



20 REPEAT THE STEPS

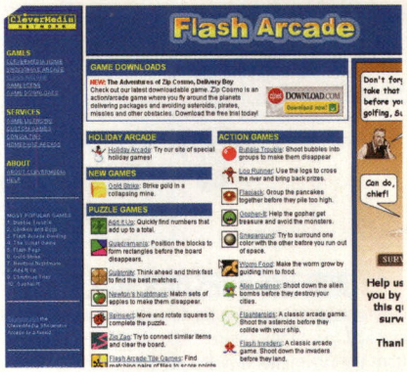
Repeat steps 17 to 19 using a question mark, and again for the word 'Guess'. You can close down Freehand now, and if you have Swift 3d open this and import the text line-up.eps that you created earlier and remove the bevel.



21 ADD TEXT

Use the Text tool to add the text 'Line Up' to the centre and scale down to fit the size. Add a shiny orange colour to the outer edge graphic and a shiny deep red to the centre, then group the two together and rotate to show perspective.

BOOKMARKS



FLASH ARCADE

www.flasharcade.com

The Flash Arcade Web site is a great place to go to when you are creating games, as you can get so much inspiration from the existing games. You can see how long the games take to download then try to better them.

GAMES CRAZE

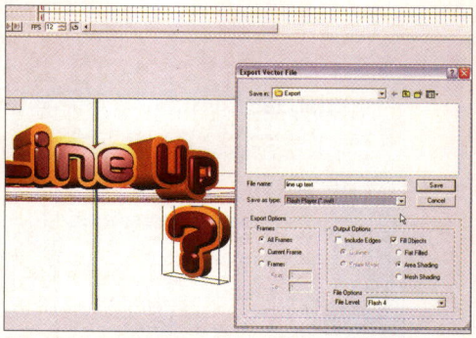
www.gamescraze.com

Another great resource for checking out other games. You will notice that the games are very playable, which is the most important aspect of games production. You can even submit your own creations to Games Craze!

EXPERT ADVICE

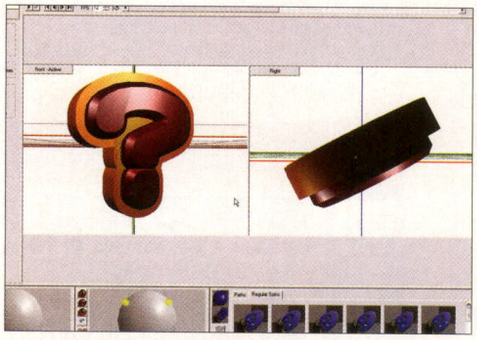
SMOOTH OPERATOR

When you are drawing there are several ways that you can enhance your drawing skills to get the best result for your illustration. After completing a drawing you can use the black Arrow Pointer and if you hold it just over the edge of a curve a small line should appear next to it. You can now bend your curve in any direction. If you wish to smooth a line that you have drawn, you can select the appropriate line and from the Modify menu choose Smooth. You may need to select this operation several times to get the right result.



22 ADD THE QUESTION MARK

Add the question mark.eps in the same way as before and add text to the centre. Once positioned, choose Export from the File menu. Give it a suitable name, choose Fill Objects and Area Shading in the Export options and click Save.



23 ADD AN ANIMATION

Delete the 'Line Up' text and outline from the document and click on the Animation tab to access the pre-built animations. Drag and drop the Horizontal Right onto the question mark group. Now export the entire animation to include edges and select outlines, saving as 'question.swf'.

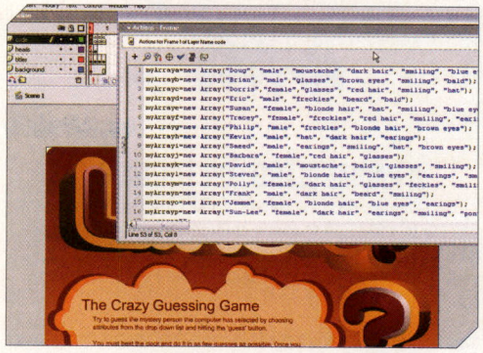
IN DETAIL: GETTING INTO ARRAYS

Find out how invaluable arrays are and how they're used in this tutorial to store information

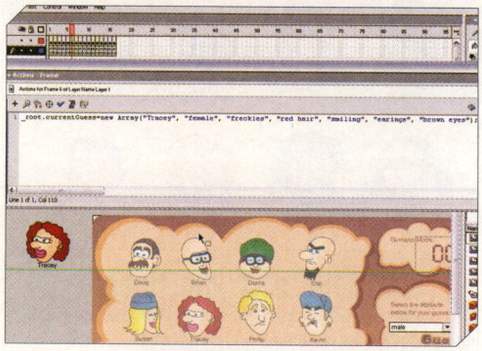
If you've ever used variables in your coding you'll probably appreciate how useful they are. Variables will store a piece of information until you want to retrieve it. At first this may seem longwinded, but once you get the hang of them, it becomes difficult to remember a time when you didn't use them. Arrays are just like variables but bigger. Variables store one piece of information, but arrays actually store as much information as you can put into them. The data is separated by a comma, and if the data happens to be text, as in this tutorial, the data is enclosed within inverted commas.

Each array is declared with the information in it, but that can also be added later. We will use loops (ie programming loops), later in the tutorial to get the information out of the array by searching it. In the tutorial we'll create a movie clip called 'selectedClip'. This will automatically generate a random selection by placing information about each character on a different frame. A random number will jump the playhead to the frame that corresponds with the random number, and that way a random character will be selected. Every time a selection of characteristics is made it will be checked against this specific selection.

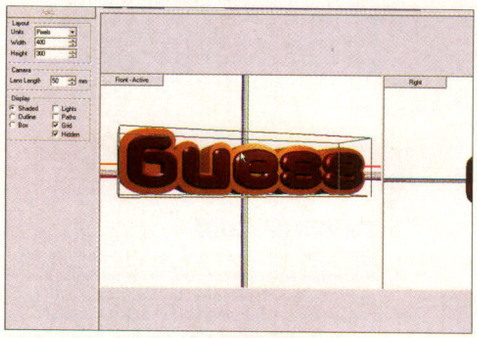
The basic rule is to use an array when more than one piece of information has to be stored. This is perfect for the tutorial, as each character has a set of characteristics, ie multiple data all referring to one element.



Arrays can be a pain, but as you can see above, they build structure into your game, and make things easier in the long run

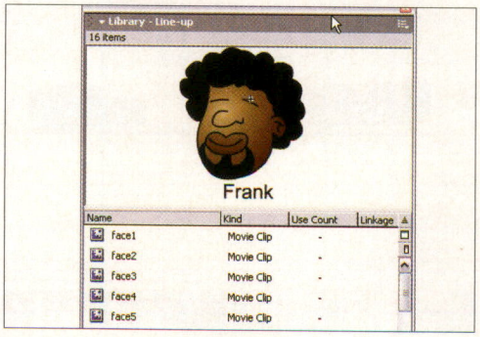


For your 'right answer', simply copy a random face to the side, then create the code that scans other faces' arrays for likenesses



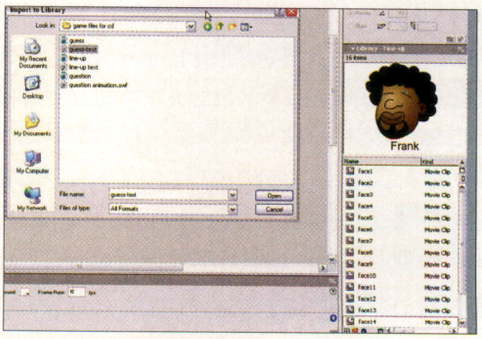
24 CREATE THE GUESS TEXT

Create a new document in Swift 3d and import the text outline from guess.eps. As before, remove the bevel and change the colour to orange. Add the word 'Guess' with the Text tool and export as in the previous step, ready for importing into Flash.



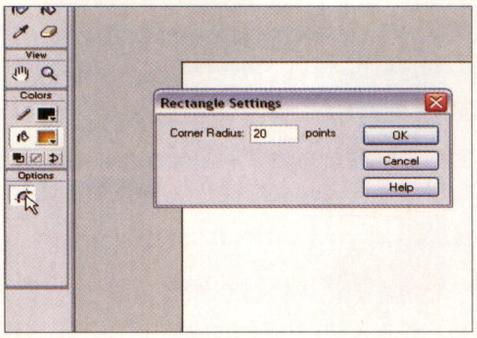
25 RETURN TO FLASH

Close Swift 3d, open Flash and the Line-up.fla that you have been working on. If you have had difficulty drawing all the faces, you can always open 'line-up start with faces drawn.fla' from the cover CD, as this has the completed faces already in the library.



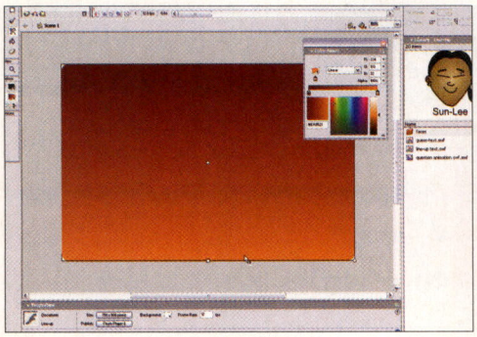
26 IMPORT TO THE LIBRARY

From the File menu in Flash choose Import to Library and then import the three files that you created in Swift 3d, or import the files line-up text.swf, guess text.swf and question animation.swf from the cover CD. These will appear in the library along with the faces.



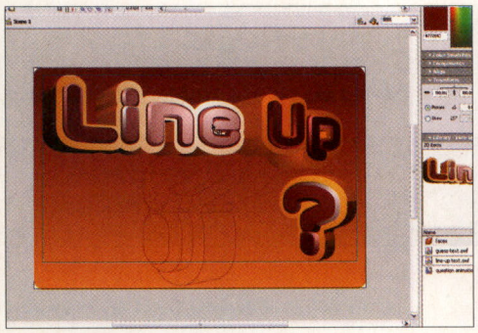
27 TIDY THE LIBRARY

Create a new folder in the library and name it 'faces'; drag all the Face symbols into it so it keeps the library tidy. Select the Rectangle tool from the toolbar, click on the Rounded Corner option and give the rectangle 20 point corners in the pop-up window.



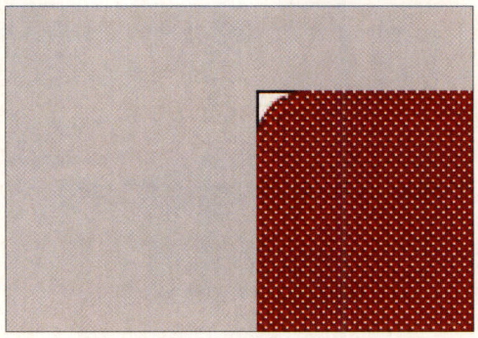
29 IT'S ALL IN THE BLEND

Click on the first colour stop and change the colour to #721C1C, then click the second colour square and change the colour here to #EA8521. Use the Fill Transform tool to rotate the fill so it blends from a deep red at the top to orange at the bottom.



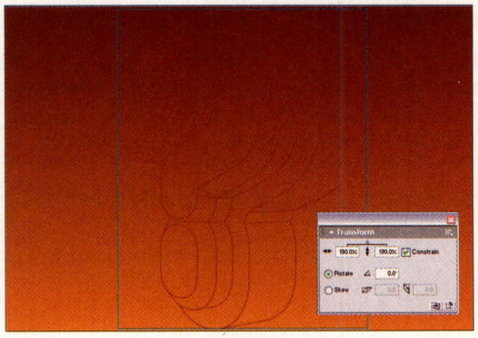
31 ADD THE GAME TITLE

Add the graphic line-up text.swf from the library to the stage and use the Transform palette to scale it up to 190%, so it fills the width of the screen. Position the game title towards the top of the screen as shown in the screenshot above.



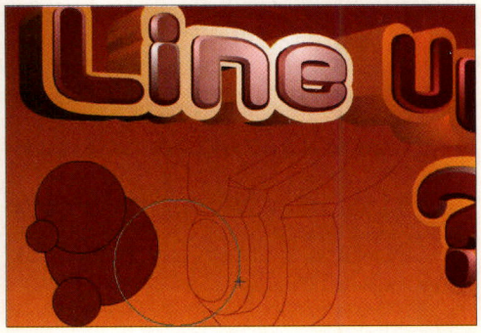
28 DRAW THE RECTANGLE

Now draw a rectangle to fill the page. Position at 0 pixels for the X and Y coordinates and make sure it is 750 pixels wide by 500 pixels high in the Properties palette. Double-click the Stroke and hit the Delete key to remove it. Choose Linear as the fill in the Colour Mixer palette.



30 ADD THE QUESTION

Rename the layer 'background' and create a new layer, naming this 'titles', and drag the 'question animation.swf' from the library onto the stage. Using the Transform palette scale this up to 190%, then change the colour to Tint with a value of #993300 on the Properties palette.



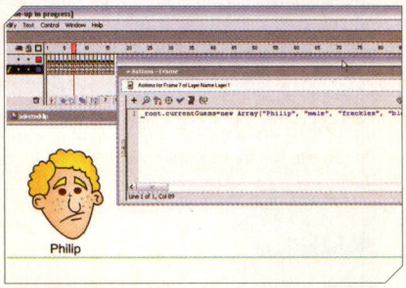
32 DRAW CIRCLES

Using the Circle tool, hold down Shift to draw exact circles and draw circles as shown on the screenshot above. Make sure the fill colour is #77201C and keep adding circles so that we can build up a panel of circles underneath the title.

TECHNIQUE

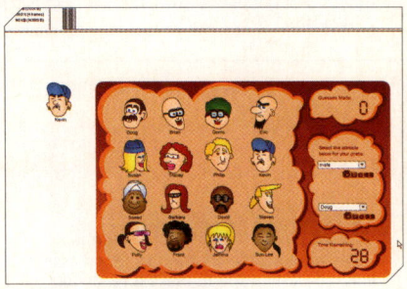
TESTING AND DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Making sure your game does exactly what you want it to is a key area of any games production. To make sure our game is working correctly we need some visual feedback to let us know that the selections made by the user are working.



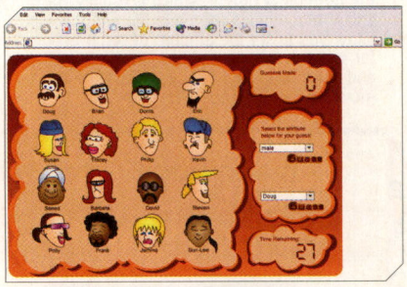
1 WHICH HEAD?

We need to know which head the computer has selected to test the drop menu against it. The selectClip instance is our visual reference – this is the random selection made by the computer and the right head is on each frame for the description.



2 VISIBLE IN TESTING

Whenever you test a Flash movie by pressing Control & Enter, you get to see more off the stage if you are viewing on a PC, so you can see the selectClip and which head is chosen. On a Mac you have to pull the corner of the movie out to see this.



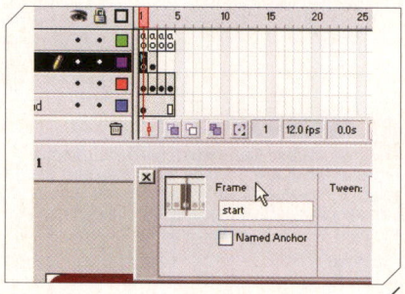
3 NOT VISIBLE DURING PLAY

Once you've published the movie and it is embedded in a Web page, there's no way to see off the edge of the stage, so your players will not be able to cheat and see which selection the computer has made.

EXPERT ADVICE

FRAME LABELS

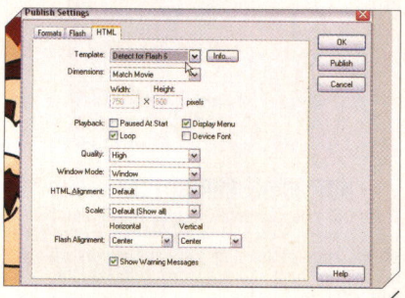
Frame labels are particularly useful when developing Flash documents for navigation purposes. You can navigate to a frame label in the same way as you would navigate to a frame number, except that you have to put speech marks around the label such as _root.gotoAndStop("time");. So what's the advantage of using them? If you decide to change any of the positioning of the contents of your file later, the frame label doesn't have to change, as this will move as you add more frames to the start of the movie. If you had hard coded the exact frame number, you would have to search for every code that sent the user to the frame number and update it.

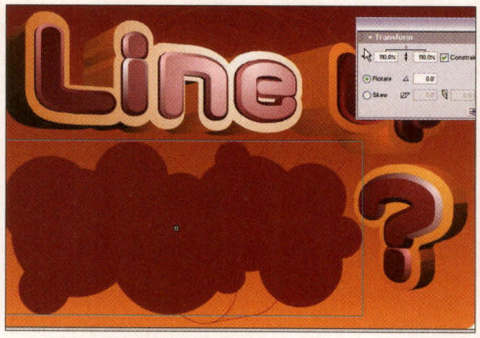


EXPERT ADVICE

EXPORTING THE FINISHED MOVIE

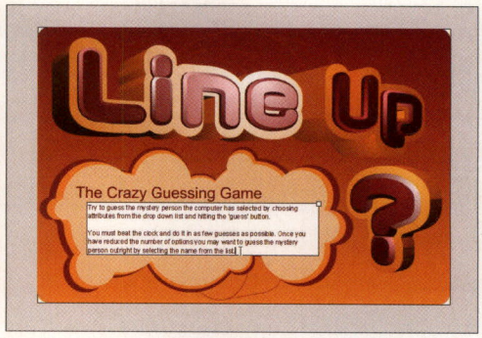
There are a number of ways to export your finished Flash movie to make it ready for running on the Web. Whenever you test your movie by pressing the Control & Return key, this will actually generate a .swf which can be added to the Web. If you don't want the hassle of placing it in an HTML page later, Flash can do this for you. First choose Publish Settings from the File menu and you can select the method of output, which is usually Flash and HTML. Click on the Flash tab and this will allow you to set the amount of compression for sounds and images. Click on the HTML tab and you can specify how you want the Flash movie to look on your HTML page.





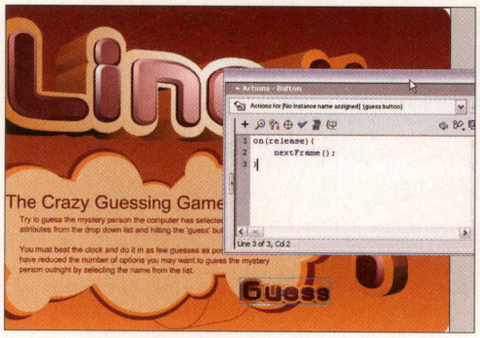
33 CONVERT TO SYMBOL

Once you've filled in the circles to fill the available space, double-click the Stroke and hit Delete to remove it. Now choose Convert to Symbol from the Insert menu, naming it 'blob' and making it a movie clip. Now scale the Blob symbol up to 110% in the Transform palette.



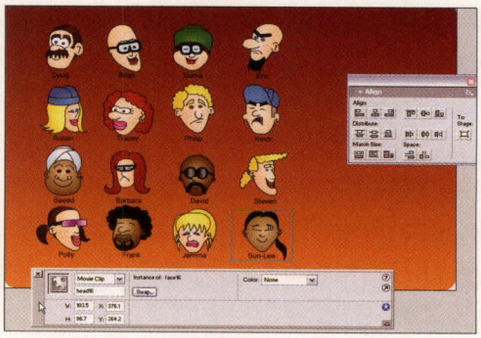
34 DUPLICATE THE IMAGE

Copy the Blob symbol and change the tint to #E98420, scaling it down to 105%. Copy this again, scale down to 100% and change the tint to #EABD8F. Now add some text to the shape area as shown above, using the Text tool and the Properties palette to style the text.



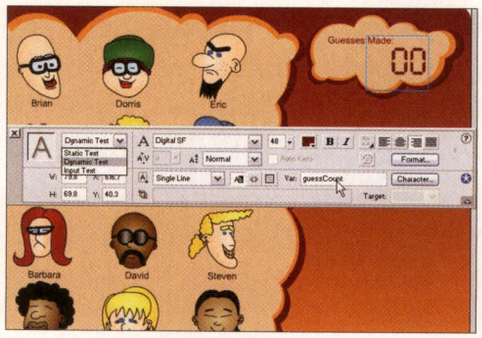
36 INITIAL VARIABLES

Create a new layer and name this 'code'. With frame 1 selected, press F9 to open the ActionScript editor. From the cover CD open step36.txt in Notepad and copy and paste the code over into the ActionScript editor. This code declares the opening variables of the game and the arrays of information.



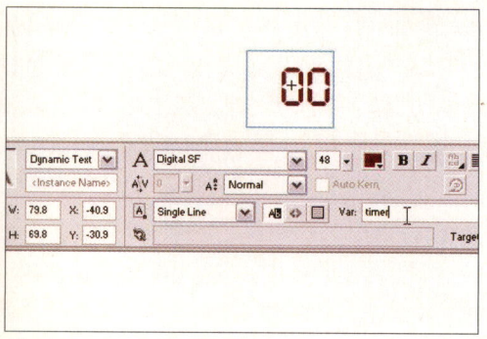
37 PLACE THE HEADS

Select frame 2 of the Background layer and press F5 to add a frame, create a new layer and name it 'heads', placing a keyframe at frame 2. Add a frame label to frame 1 of Start, then drag all the heads from the library to the stage as shown above. Name each instance 'head1' to 'head16' in Properties.



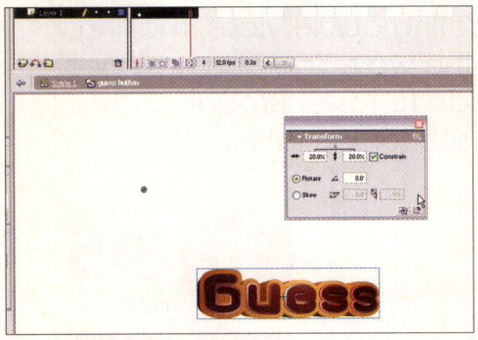
39 ADD A SCORE SYSTEM

Draw circles to create a small section in the top right of the screen. Convert it to a symbol as you did before and name it 'blob3'. Copy the instance and paste two copies, changing the tint. Use the Text tool to add the text, make the numerical box dynamic with the variable of 'guessCount'.



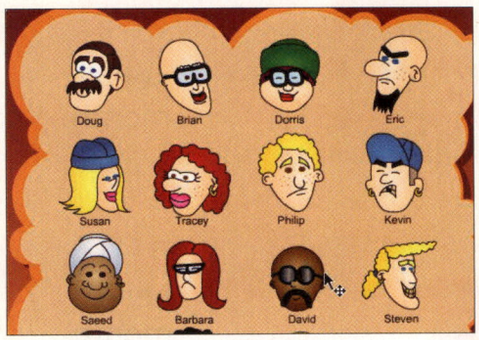
40 CREATE A TIMER

Create a new symbol in the library by pressing Control & F8, name it 'timer' and make it a movie clip. Add a dynamic text box to the stage with the variable of 'timer'. Add a couple of zeros in the text box, for positioning, then select frame 2 and press F5 to add a frame.



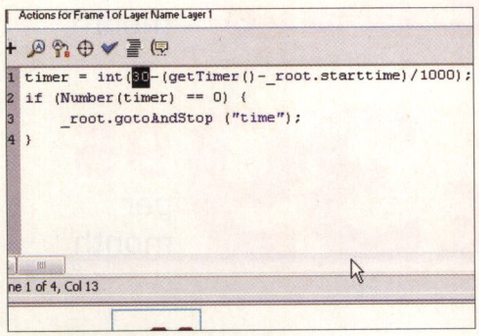
35 CREATE A GUESS BUTTON

Press F8 to create a new symbol, naming it 'guess button' and change the behaviour to a button. Click OK then drag the guess-text.swf from the library to the stage and resize it to 20%. Select the Hit frame, press F5, then click the Scene 1 tab to return to the scene.



38 DRAW CIRCLES AGAIN

Select frame 2 of the Titles layer and press F7. Now draw circles behind the faces so they cover the shape of the faces. Remove the Stroke, from the Modify menu choose Convert to Symbol and name it 'blob2'. Copy the instance and paste it twice, changing the tint as in step 34.



41 ADD THE TIMER CODE

Select frame 1 and press F9 to open the ActionScript editor. Copy the code from the screenshot, which will power the timer to count backwards from 30 in seconds. If you want to change the time available, change the 30, highlighted above, to a higher number.

IN DETAIL: 'BIG UP' THE CODE

On the first Guess button an impressive amount of code is used, but what does it mean?

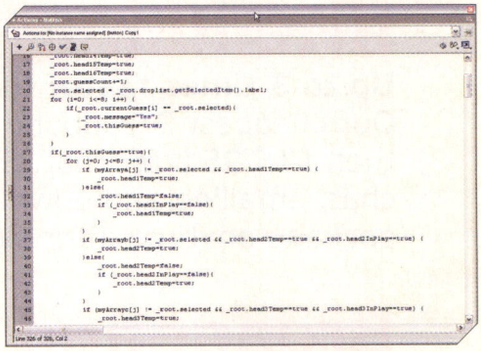
The first 20 lines don't really do a lot in the code except for making sure that certain variables are reset, ready for the checking process to begin, and extracting the selection made from the drop menu.

Once that's done, line 20 starts a for loop which checks each of a possible eight entries of data that could be stored within the array currentGuess (which is actually the character the computer has selected as the mystery person). If Flash finds that the selection made from the drop menu is true – is the same as one of the selections in the array – it turns the variable thisGuess to equal 'true'. In line 27 it can then act on that. If thisGuess equals false, it jumps down to line 257, ignoring the other code.

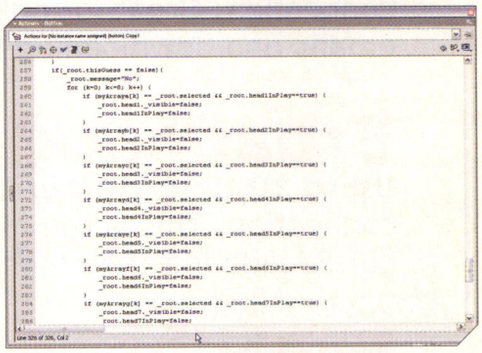
In line 27 another for loop checks the first array to see if it doesn't equal the selection made by the user. In plain English, what happens here is that Flash is told to assume that the heads do not equal the player's selection and that they should prove themselves.

This is repeated for each head, and based on the outcome of this, the code from line 158 to 256 turns the actual visibility of the heads on or off, while making sure heads that are already turned invisible don't pop back on again.

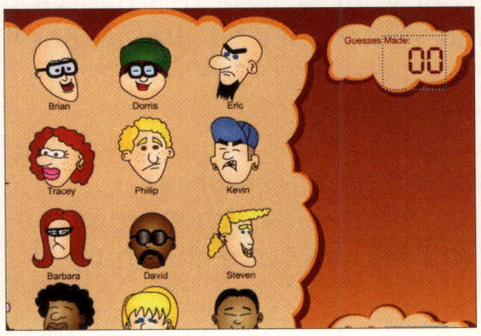
If the user selection was not the same characteristic as that found in the person that the computer has selected, everyone with that characteristic has their visibility turned off.



This ActionScript checks the eight categories of the selected winning face against those remaining on the board

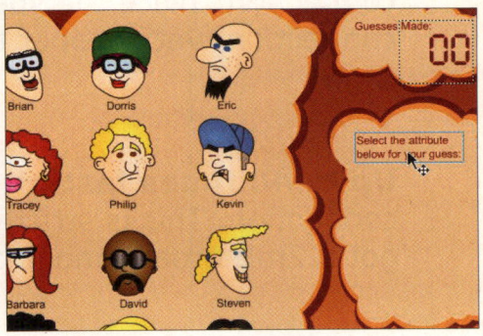


Once the visitor has made their guess, Flash will then turn off the wrong entries by checking their arrays off



42 COPY THE BLOBS

Copy the blob3 symbols, which are behind the number of guesses. Paste this and position in the bottom right of the screen. Add the text stating 'time remaining', then drag the Timer symbol from the library onto the stage and place inside these blobs.



43 DRAW MORE CIRCLES

Now use the Circle tool to draw circles so that they cover the area between the guesses and timer. Convert the graphic to a symbol and copy it twice, changing the colour of the tint to orange and beige as before. Then add the text as shown at the top of this graphic.

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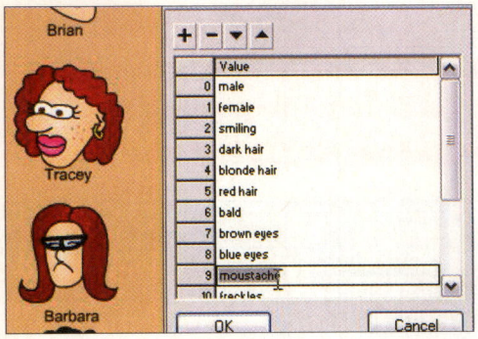
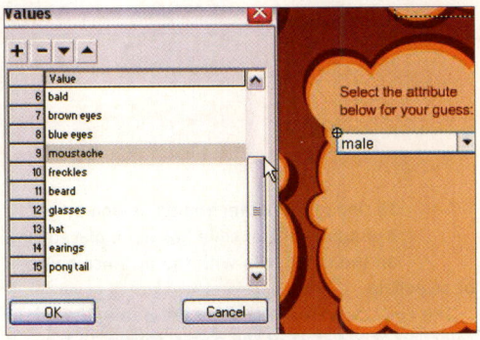


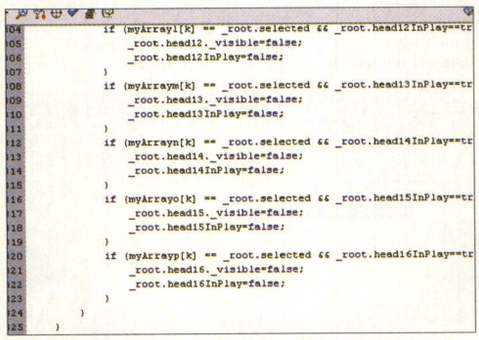
44 ADD A DROP MENU

From the Components panel drag a ComboBox onto the stage under the text added in the last step. Give this the instance name 'droplist' and change the width to 120 in the Properties. Select the labels, click the magnifying glass and add the labels as shown.



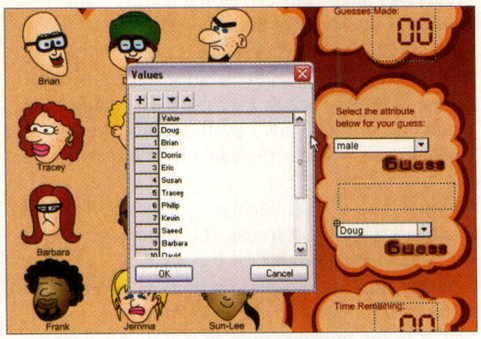
45 ADD REMAINING LABELS

Add the remaining labels as shown above, then add the Guess button just under this and create a dynamic text box below with the variable of 'message'. Make this text quite large, around 24 pixels so that it's visible.



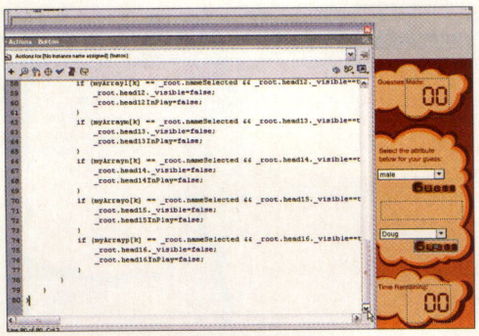
46 ADD 326 LINES OF CODE

Select the Guess button, press F9 to open the ActionScript editor and from the cover CD open the file step46.txt. Now copy and paste across the 326 lines of code which will make a guess based on the selection of the drop menu above.



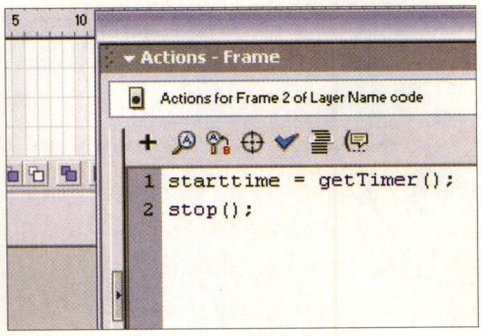
47 ADD ANOTHER COMBOBOX

Drag in another ComboBox, giving it the instance name of 'namelist' with a width of 120 pixels. Now add the labels for each name of the heads on the screen. When you have done this click OK and add another Guess button below this drop menu.



48 MORE ACTIONSCRIPT

Now select the new Guess button and press F9. From the cover CD open step48.txt and copy and paste the code from this file into the ActionScript editor in Flash. This code will check the person's name to see if you have guessed the name correctly outright.



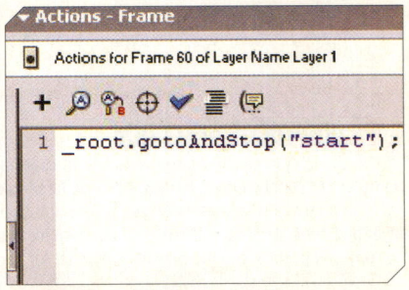
49 ADD A KEYFRAME

Select frame 2 of the Code layer and press F6 to add a keyframe, then press F9 to open the ActionScript editor and copy the code as shown in the screenshot above. Press Control & F8 to create a new symbol and name it 'selectedclip', making it a movie clip.

TECHNIQUE

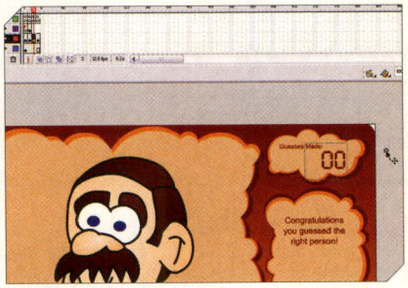
REPLAYING THE GAME

In the main game there is no way to play again, so we're going to show you how to let the user do this. We could use a button to take the player back, but instead we'll send them back to the title screen after a few seconds.



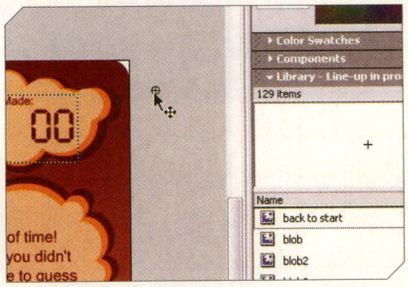
1 CREATE A NEW MOVIE CLIP

Click the Plus in the library to create a symbol, make it a movie clip, name it 'back to start'. Select frame 60 and F6 to add a keyframe, then F9 to open the ActionScript editor. Copy the code shown above.



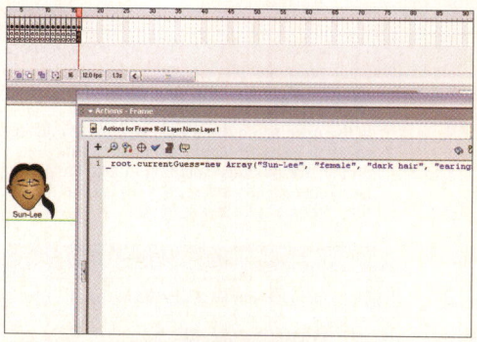
2 ADD TO FRAME 3

Close the ActionScript editor, return to the main timeline via Scene 1. Pick frame 3 of Titles layer; drag the 'back to start' movie clip from the library to just off the right edge of the stage. A white circle appears.



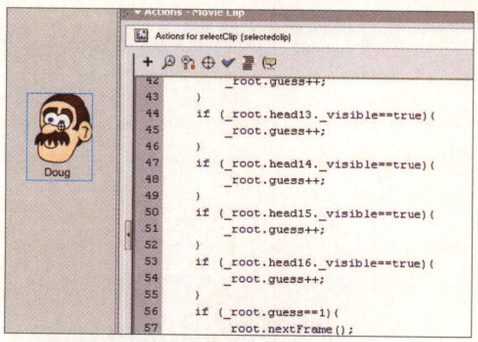
3 ADD TO FRAME 4

In frame 4 of Titles, drag in 'back to start'; place just off the right edge. As the main timeline is stopped on these frames, the clips play until they reach frame 60 then return the playhead to the frame label 'start'.



50 ADD FACES AND CODE

Select frame 1 of the movie clip, Shift-click frame 16 and press F6 to fill with keyframes. Add one head to each frame until they are all full. Now create keyframes on a new layer and open step50.txt. There's code in here for each frame, so copy and paste it into the ActionScript editor for each frame.



51 DRAG TO STAGE

With frame 2 of the Titles layer selected, drag 'selectedclip' from the library to the stage and place off the left-hand edge, giving it the instance name of 'selectClip'. Press F9, open step51.txt from the cover CD, and copy and paste the code across.

IN DETAIL: HOW DO YOU WIN?

A Win And Lose screen has been set up in the game, but how do you get there? Read on to find out...

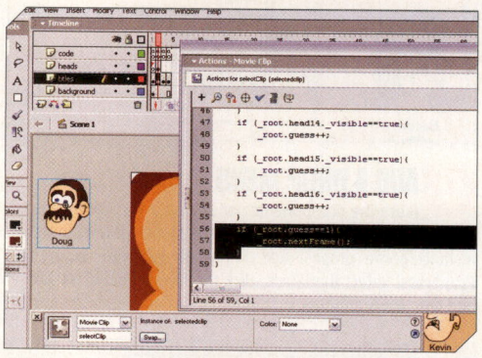
To find out whether you have won or not, a simple piece of code has been placed on the movie clip with the instance name of selectClip.

The code on here, as well as generating a random selection at the start of the game, checks 12 times a second (because that is the frame rate of the Flash movie), how many heads are actually visible on the screen. If a head is visible, a variable called 'guess' is increased by one. Therefore, at the beginning of the game the variable 'guess' is equal to 16 because 16 heads are visible and in play. As the game progresses and heads are turned invisible, the counter is obviously reduced.

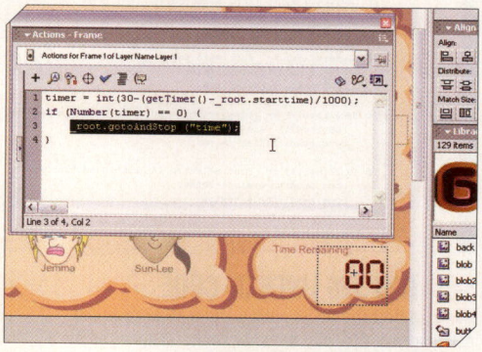
On line 56 of this code there is an if statement which checks to see if the variable 'guess' is equal to one. A double equals (==) in programming languages checks if one equals another, whereas a single equals (=) tells the variable that it does equal the data on the right.

When 'guess' does equal one, the code moves the playhead to the next frame. This next frame contains the Win screen.

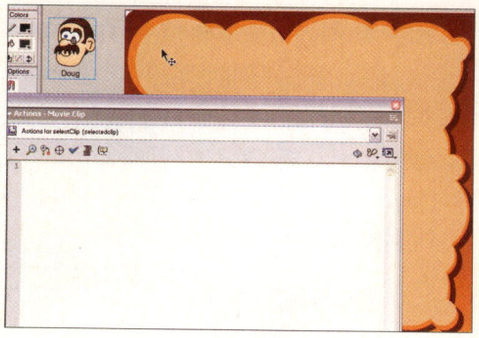
Inside the Timer movie clip there is some code on frame 1 which reduces the time in seconds to zero, and as in the previous code an if statement checks to see when the timer variable is equal to zero. When it is, the playhead is moved to the frame label of 'time' on the _root timeline, which is Scene 1. The frame label 'time' is on frame 4, and this frame contains the Lose screen.



Once there is only one character remaining, the above code will transport the visitor to the 'win' screen

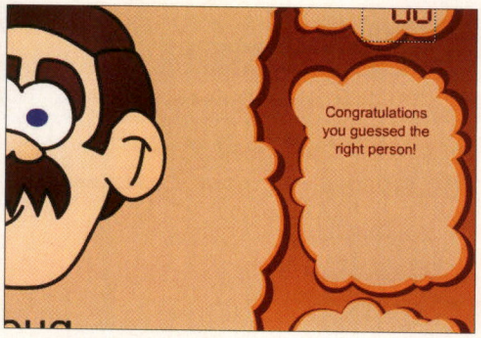


Time waits for no man, and when the clock runs out, then the visitor has lost. The above code takes them to the losers' paddock



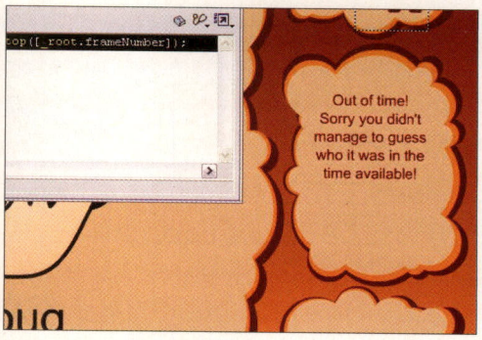
52 EXTEND TIMELINE

Select frame 4 of the Background layer and press F5. Now select frame 3 of the Titles layer and press F6. Remove all the guessing and timing information. Click on the selectClip, press F9 and remove all the ActionScript. When you're done, scale it up to 420%.



53 A NEW KEYFRAME

Move the selectClip head so that it fills the main area of the screen and add the text as shown. Select frame 3 of the Code layer, press F9 then open step53.txt from the cover CD. Copy and paste the code over to frame 3 of the Code layer.

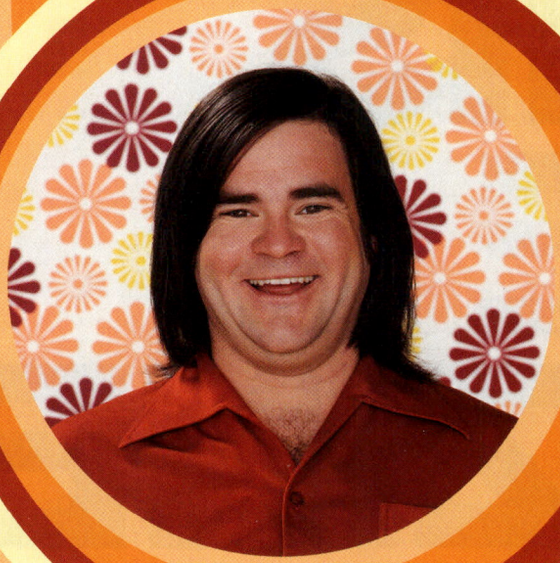


54 OUT OF TIME

Select frame 4 of the Titles layer and press F6; change the 'congratulations' message to an 'out of time' message. Now add a keyframe at frame 4 of the code, add a frame label of 'time' and press F9. Copy in the code from step54.txt on the cover CD to finish.

1974

Jimmy and Mikey know rocking value when they see it.



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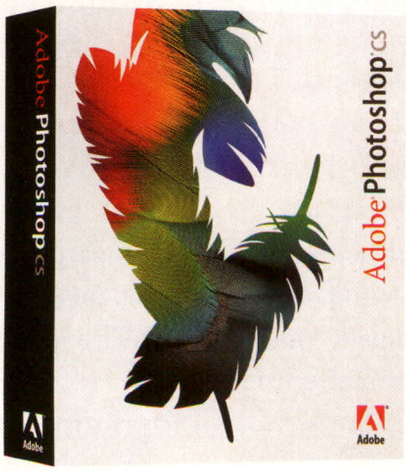

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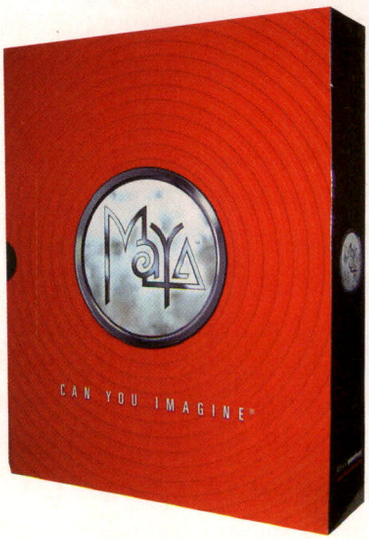

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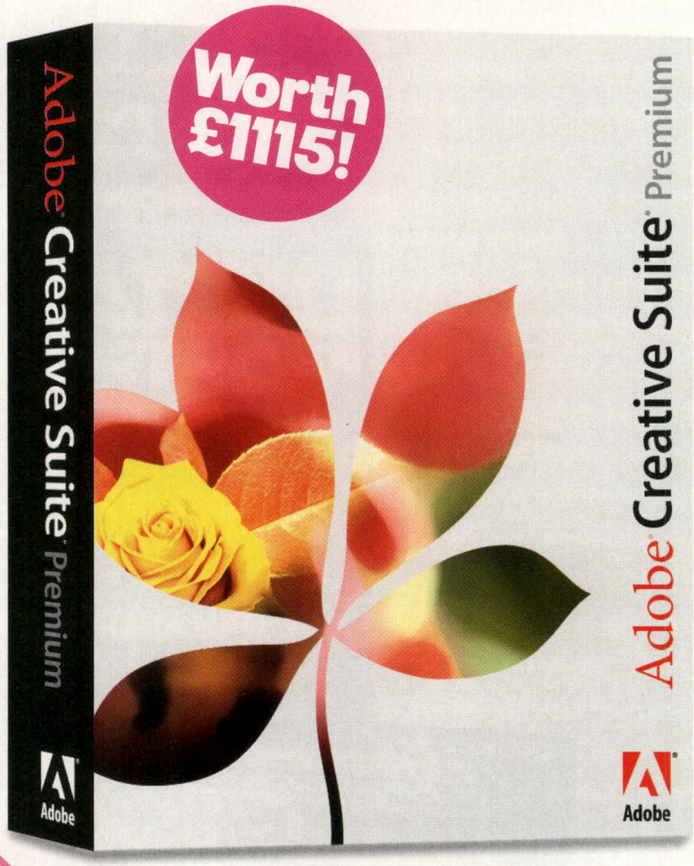

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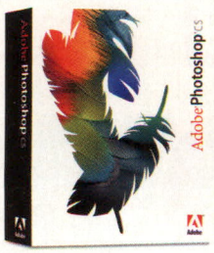

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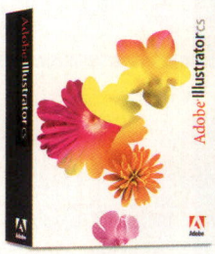

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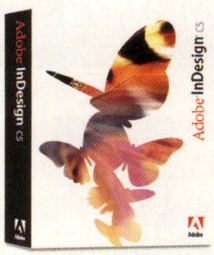

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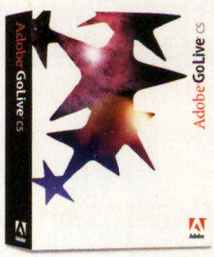

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BUILD A WEB PORTAL THAT VISITORS CAN CUSTOMISE

THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a CSS and XHTML layout for the portal

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
One hour

ON THE DISC
Developer/ Tutorial files: global.css, index.php

PART ONE

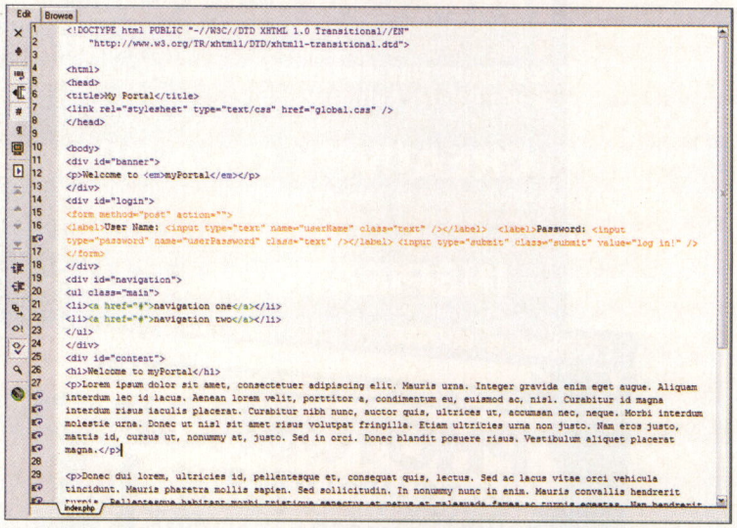
BUILD A WEB PORTAL THAT VISITORS CAN CUSTOMISE

This multi-part tutorial will lead you through the process of designing a site that users can customise to their preferences

Reams of sites now offer user customisable portal pages that let visitors adjust settings to effectively create their own home page. This customisation takes many forms, from being able to change the look and feel of a site by applying a 'theme', to being able to precisely filter content to your own preferences. An obvious example of this type of site can be seen at 'My Yahoo' – **my.yahoo.com/**. Creating a site that enables users to customise it to their own tastes involves quite a lot of forethought and planning, and for the best results that planning should start before you even begin to design the look and feel.

In this multi-part tutorial we will work through some of the issues involved in creating such a site by creating a portal site that allows the users to customise both look and feel, and content. We will start by designing a site using methods that make it very easy to swap the entire design based on the user's choice. Then we will implement a user login system using PHP and MySQL so that we have users to tie preferences to. Once our login system is complete we will begin the first stage in developing the customisation by allowing users to change the look of the site.

Further down the line we will work more extensively with PHP and MySQL to introduce the ability for users to view content based on selections they have made in their preferences.



```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
    "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>My Portal</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="global.css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="banner">
<p>Welcome to <em>myPortal</em></p>
</div>
<div id="login">
<form method="post" action="">
<label>User Name: <input type="text" name="userName" class="text" /></label>  <label>Password: <input
type="password" name="userPassword" class="text" /></label> <input type="submit" class="submit" value="log in!" />
</form>
</div>
<div id="navigation">
<ul class="main">
<li><a href="#">navigation one</a></li>
<li><a href="#">navigation two</a></li>
</ul>
</div>
<div id="content">
<h1>Welcome to myPortal</h1>
<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Mauris urna. Integer gravida enim eget augue. Aliquam
interdum leo id lacus. Aenean lorem velit, porttitor a, condimentum eu, euismod ac, nisl. Curabitur id magna
interdum risus iaculis placerat. Curabitur nibh nunc, auctor quis, ultrices ut, accumsan nec, neque. Morbi interdum
molestie urna. Donec ut nisl sit amet risus volutpat fringilla. Etiam ultricies urna non justo. Nam eros justo,
mattis id, cursus ut, nonummy at, justo. Sed in orci. Donec blandit posuere risus. Vestibulum aliquet placerat
magna.</p>

<p>Donec dui lorem, ultricies id, pellentesque et, consequat quis, lectus. Sed ac lacus vitae orci vehicula
tincidunt. Mauris pharetra mollis sapien. Sed sollicitudin. In nonummy nunc in enim. Mauris convallis hendrerit
```

The XHTML document in a text editor. The document contains no formatting information, but just mark-up for the document structure

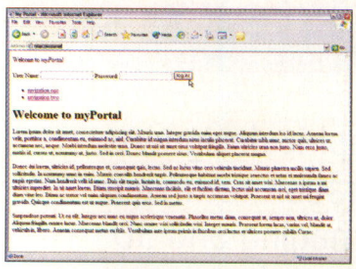
In this first part of this tutorial we will be laying down the groundwork for a user-customisable site. We will be doing this by first creating a structured document in XHTML and then creating our page design using CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) instead of tables for layout. Using CSS means that all the information that controls colour scheme, text size and even the position of elements on the page is contained within the stylesheet, so when the user selects a certain option for the look of the site, we simply need to select a new stylesheet and save this as their preference, rather than changing the actual document.

We don't have the space to go through XHTML and CSS in great detail in this tutorial, but if you set up the example page and CSS from the cover CD and experiment with changing the colours and positions of elements, you should quite quickly become accustomed to how this way of laying out your pages works. Throughout this series of tutorials we will be adding to the stylesheet and learning more about CSS. In the meantime, to get more information on CSS the following sites are a good starting point:

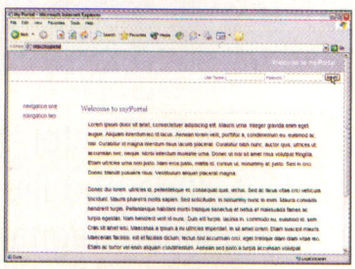
www.w3schools.com/css/ – The W3Schools CSS tutorial is an excellent introduction to the subject, and also a good reference site.

www.nypl.org/styleguide/ – XHTML and CSS basics presented in an easy to read format.

www.westciv.com/style_master/academy/css_tutorial/ – Westciv CSS tutorial. This is an excellent tutorial to work through if you are keen to really learn CSS thoroughly. ■



The XHTML document as displayed in a browser without the stylesheet. Here the document is understandable although rather dull

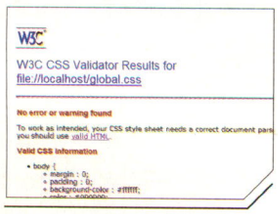


After applying the simple stylesheet to this document we see the design – the stylesheet dictates the positioning of page elements

CODING TIP

VALIDATING CSS AND XHTML

Having written your CSS and XHTML for the portal you should validate it at the W3C Web site. Validating your mark-up and CSS helps you to remove any small errors that could cause a problem for some browsers and also makes debugging any problems that occur far easier. To validate your XHTML go to **validator.w3.org**, and you can upload your document to the validator. CSS can be validated at **jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/**, and again you can upload your actual CSS file for checking. Work through any errors and warnings, starting with the first, re-uploading your file to check after fixing each error.



THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

There's no time like the present, so let's start creating our Web portal:

1 The XHTML document starts with a DOCTYPE. All HTML and XHTML documents should contain a DOCTYPE; this tells the browser which version of the markup language you are using. If you don't have a DOCTYPE the browser has to guess.

2 We link to the stylesheet which contains all of the information about how this document should look.

3 The first div on the page has an ID of 'banner'. This ID corresponds to the section in the stylesheet that begins #banner, so the browser understands to display this div and its contents using the style rules for #banner.

4 The log-in form is also enclosed in a div, and the form fields are styled with CSS.

5 The navigation uses a list to enclose the navigation items. The list items are styled with CSS.

6 This is the content area in which all of the main content can be placed on each page.

7 The entire stylesheet is on the cover CD, as it's too long to publish on one page. To explain how the CSS styles an area of the page, we'll look at the rules used for the #banner div.

The first line, text-align: right; aligns the content of this div to the right, in our case the words "Welcome to myPortal".
border-bottom: 1px solid #9B9DBD; adds a one-pixel margin, that is a solid line to the bottom of the div in the colour #9B9DBD;
margin-bottom: 4px; ensures there's some space between this and the next page element.
background-color: #C9CADB; gives us the purple background colour.
color: #ffffff; colours the text white.
margin-top: 0px; ensures there is no top margin.

In the next section, #banner p, we are simply saying that these rules apply only to <p> tags within the element with an ID of #banner.
The padding-right setting stops the text being right against the browser window, and padding-top the same for the top of the document. We've also set the font size for this text so it stands out.

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">
```

```
<html>
<head>
<title>My Portal</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="global.css" />
</head>
<body>
```

```
<div id="login">
<form method="post" action="">
<label>User Name: <input type="text" name="userName" class="text" /></label>  <label>Password:
<input type="password" name="userPassword" class="text" /></label> <input type="submit"
class="submit" value="log in!" />
</form>
</div>
```

```
<div id="navigation">
<ul class="main">
<li><a href="#">navigation one</a></li>
<li><a href="#">navigation two</a></li>
</ul>
</div>
```

```
<div id="content">
<h1>Welcome to myPortal</h1>
<p>Content here</p>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

```
#banner {
        text-align: right;
        border-bottom: 1px solid #9B9DBD;
        margin-bottom: 4px;
        background-color: #C9CADB;
        color: #ffffff;
        margin-top: 0px;
}


#banner p {
        padding-right: 20px;
        padding-top: 10px;
        font-size: 18px;
        margin-bottom: 8px;
}
```

THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
To add Delete Record functionality to the Content Management System

SKILL LEVEL

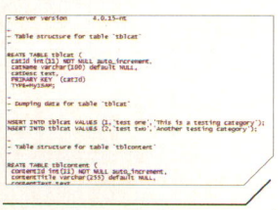
TIME REQUIRED
One hour

ON THE DISC
Developer/ Tutorial files: admin [folder], articles.php, cms.sql, global.css, showarticle.php, test.php

CODING TIP

BACKING UP A DATABASE

Once you let users loose on your site, you'll want to make sure you have a backup of the database, just in case the worst happens. You can back up a MySQL database by using the mysqldump commandline utility. First you need to change into the MySQL directory. From here, type:
mysqldump DB_NAME —user=USERNAME –password=PASSWORD > /path/to/home/db.sql
DB_NAME = your database name, the path is where you save the file. On a Windows server this will be a path like c:\web\db.sql. On your Web host you will probably be able to save the script into your home directory.



PART FIVE

CREATE A CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In part five of this tutorial we will add Delete pages to our Content Management System's Administration section

Your Content Management System should be moving along nicely by now, as we're now into the fifth part of our series. If you have been following along so far you will have installed PHP and MySQL on your computer, created database tables in MySQL to store content, and created pages that display content which is categorised – the categories making up a simple navigation menu. In the last tutorial we began to create an Administration section for the site. So far our Administration section allows us to insert data to the database, which will display on our Article pages. We also created functionality that allows us to list all articles currently displayed in the database then select an article and edit its contents.

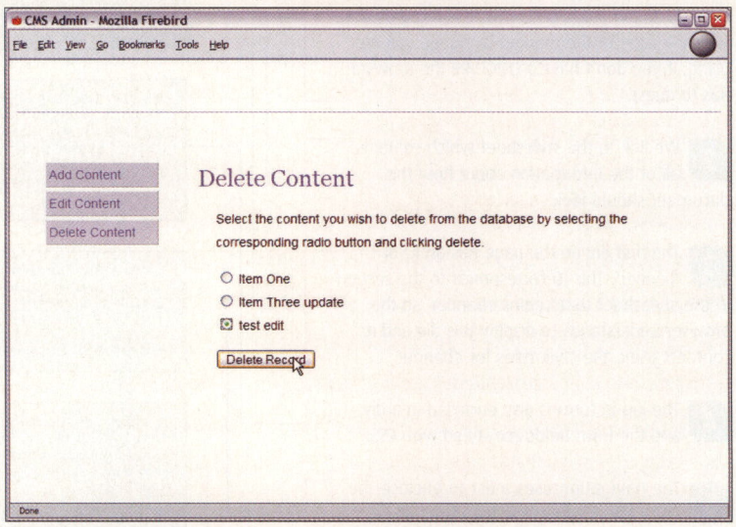
If you didn't catch earlier instalments of this tutorial but have Apache, PHP and MySQL installed on your computer, you can pick up from this point by running the SQL script from the CD in MySQL (or opening it up in Notepad and creating the table structure by hand), and using the files that are on the CD. The files on the CD contain all the code from this tutorial and the last four issues, including a stylesheet to do some basic formatting.

The Administration section will help you to enable non-technical users to administer the site. Most people understand the concept of completing the fields in a form and submitting it, and so a forms-based Content Management System will be usable for anyone who's accustomed to using the Web. The Delete script that we will create in this section will give users a way to remove pages from the Content Management System that are no longer required.

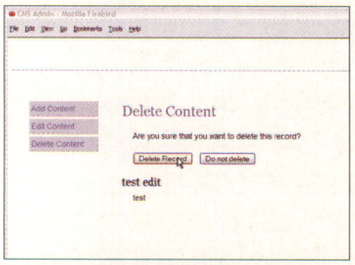
As with the Edit pages, the first thing we need to do when creating pages to delete records is to give the user a way of identifying the record that they would like to delete. For the Delete pages we will do this by listing the titles of the articles alongside a radio button. The radio button will have a value that is the unique ID of that record, meaning that if it is selected and the form submitted, that value will be passed, along with the name of the field to the Delete script.

The Delete looks for the value being passed to it, and so that the user does not accidentally delete the wrong record, we will display the contents of the article to the user so they can confirm that this is indeed the record they want to remove from the database, or cancel the action – in which case the record will remain. If the user confirms the deletion, the script will remove that record from the database before displaying a confirmation that the record has been removed.

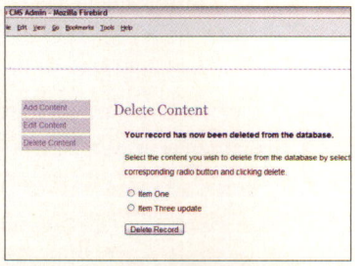
The ability to add, edit and delete records in your database is the foundation for most database-driven application development, and is something you'll need to do many times as a Web developer. ■



■ The first Delete screen lists all records in the database, along with a radiobutton to select the record for deletion



■ After selecting a record the user is shown the full article so they can check that it is the correct one



■ After deleting the record the user returns to the list where they see confirmation of the deletion, and the list

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Read on to see how to fashion a Delete application for your CMS:

1 Create a connection to the database as we have done in the other articles and select the CMS database.

2 If the Confirm button has been clicked, the value of btnDelete (the name of the button on that form) will be greater than nothing. This triggers the actual sql that deletes the record. Be careful – if you send a Delete statement with no parameter, "DELETE FROM tblContent", all content in the database will be deleted.

3 If the user has selected an article we need to display the confirmation screen so they can check that it's the correct article. Here we get the information ready to display and store it in the variables $title and $content.

4 This is our regular query to create the Categories menu that is on every page.

5 If this is neither a deletion nor a request to display a confirm page, we just display the list of articles so that our user can select one. Here we have a query that selects those articles from the database. We then open our HTML document.

6 If an article has been deleted we show a message so that the user knows that their action has been successful.

7 If the user has selected an article, the confirmation page displays. Using the data from the query described in step three, we display the title and content. The form on the page contains a hidden field that is the value of the record and two buttons. One, 'btnDelete', will actually submit the form and delete the record. The other has JavaScript that simply takes the user back to the listing without performing a delete.

8 If the user has just come to the page, they see the list of articles. Each article has a corresponding radiobutton. The radiobuttons are all named contentID, but their values are different. The values are the contentID of the record that is being displayed. Selecting a radiobutton and clicking the button will pass the ID back to the page and the Confirmation screen will display.

```
<?php
//connect to the database
$conn = mysql_connect("localhost","root","pwd");
//choose the cms db
mysql_select_db("cms", $conn);
```

```
if ($_POST['btnDelete'] != "")
{
        $sql = "DELETE FROM tblContent WHERE contentID = " . $_POST['contentID'];
        if (mysql_query($sql, $conn))
        {
                $deleted = true;
        }
}
```

```
if ($_GET['btnSelect'] != "")

{
        $delete = true;
        $article = mysql_query("SELECT contentTitle,contentText FROM tblContent WHERE contentID =
" . $_GET['contentID'], $conn);
        while ($articlerow = mysql_fetch_array($article)) {
        $title = $articlerow['contentTitle'];
        $content = $articlerow['contentText'];
```

```
        $result = mysql_query("SELECT catID, catName, catDesc FROM tblCat", $conn);
}
```

```
}
else
{
$result = mysql_query("SELECT contentID, contentTitle FROM tblContent ORDER BY contentTitle",
$conn);
}
?><!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>CMS Admin</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="../global.css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="banner">
<p> </p>
</div>
<div id="navigation">
<ul class="main">
<li><a href="add.php">Add Content</a></li>
<li><a href="edit.php">Edit Content</a></li>
<li><a href="delete.php">Delete Content</a></li>
</ul>
</div>
<div id="content">
<h1>Delete Content</h1>
```

```
<?php
if($deleted == true)
{?>
<p><strong>Your record has now been deleted from the database.</strong></p>
<?php
}
```

```
if($delete == true)
{
?>
<form method="post" action="delete.php">
<p>Are you sure that you want to delete this record?</p>
<p><input type="submit" name="btnDelete" value="Delete Record" />   <input type="button"
name="btnQuit" value="Do not delete" onclick="window.location='delete.php';" /></p>
<h2><?=$title?></h2>
<p><?=$content?></p>
<input type="hidden" name="contentID" id="contentID" value="<?=$_GET['contentID']?>" />
</form>
<?php
}
```

```
else
{
?>
<p>Select the content you wish to delete from the database by selecting the corresponding radio
button and clicking delete.</p>
<form method="get" action="delete.php">
<p>
<?php
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result)) {
        print("<input type=\"radio\" name=\"contentID\" value=\"" . $row[contentID] . "\" /> ");
        print($row[contentTitle] . "<br />\n");
}
?>
</p>
<p><input type="submit" name="btnSelect" value="Delete Record" /></p>
</form>
<?php
}
?>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW
Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create the page where postcard designs are selected

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
Two hours

ON THE DISC
Developer/ Tutorial files: dbPostcards.mdb, postcards [folder]

PART ONE

CREATE AN ONLINE POSTCARD SITE WITH ASP AND ACCESS

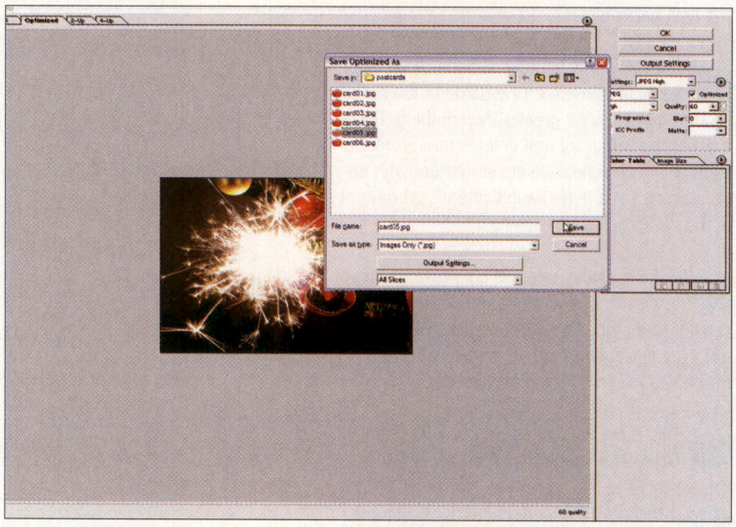
By following this new series of tutorials you can learn how to create 'send a postcard' functionality

Many Web site owners have cottoned on to the usefulness of applications that allow people to send a postcard to an email address. They increase the 'stickiness' of your site and also bring people to the site in the form of the person who receives the card clicking on the link in their email to view it. If you are a keen photographer or graphic artist, you might enjoy creating the postcards themselves and offering them to your users.

To create our postcard site we will be using ASP and an Access database. To follow this article you will need to have IIS installed on your computer. IIS comes on the Windows CD for Windows 2000 and XP Professional, but cannot be installed on XP Home or Windows Me. Windows 98 users can use PWS, also on their Windows CD. You should create a virtual directory in your site to test this application. If you plan to move the finished site to a hosting company you will need an account with ASP and Access.

The first stage in creating this application is to create some postcards ready for use. You can create your own using your own images. The images we have used are from iStockPhoto (**www.istockphoto.com**), an excellent resource for stock photography.

Once you have your images, create a directory within your site called 'postcards' and place the postcard images into it. You should then be able to view the images at a URL on your server: **http://localhost/postcards/postcards/card01.jpg**



Save your postcard images into a directory within your site. You then need to add their location to the database

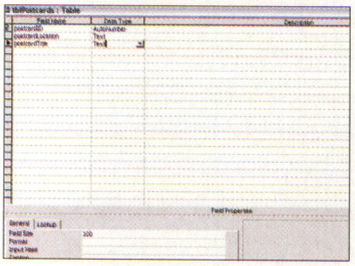
You now need to create an Access database to store details of these cards – we won't actually be storing the images in the database, just a reference to their location on the server. In Access create a new database named 'dbPostcards', save it to a location on your computer. It shouldn't be stored in your Web site folder. We have a folder named '1databases' in which we store all databases for sites.

Create a new table named 'tblPostcards'. The table needs an AutoNumber field (which should be the Primary Key) named 'postcardID', a text field of 100 characters named 'postcardLocation' and a text field of 100 characters named 'postcardTitle'. Insert into the database table the names of your six postcards using a row for each, eg:

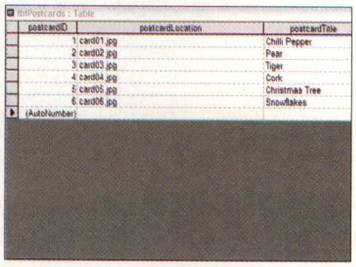
1 card01.jpg
2 card02.jpg

This database is also available on the accompanying CD, so you can just use that copy to get started.

Now that we've created our database, we can get down to actually writing the ASP that will display our postcards on the page, so a visitor to the site can select one as the first step in sending an online postcard. This article will cover connecting to the database, creating a recordset and selecting data using SQL – introducing concepts that will be the foundation of the rest of the series and useful in your ASP development as a whole. ■



Create a table named 'tblPostcards'. This table will have an AutoNumber field and a text field containing the card filename

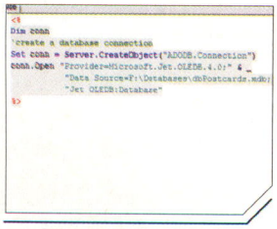


Insert the filenames of your postcard images into this new database table, so we have a postcardID for each card

CODING TIP

MAKE A CONNECTION INCLUDE

When we go on to create the rest of this application we will use the same database and therefore will need the same database connection on each page. To save writing it out each time, we can make it an 'Include'. Copy the database connection code and paste it into a new file, save it as 'conn.asp'. Delete that code from the page. Replace the code with:
<!—#include file="conn.asp"—>
This will now include that connection code on any page that you add the Include to. If you need to change the connection information, you only change it once.



```
<%
Dim conn
'create a database connection
Set conn = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
conn.Open "Provider=Microsoft.Jet.OLEDB.4.0;" & _
          "Data Source=F:\Databases\dbPostcards.mdb;"
          "Jet OLEDB:Database"
%>
```

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

With our database in tow, let's start creating the ASP to display postcards:

1 At the beginning of an ASP script you need to declare the language that you are working in – in our case this is VBScript. ASP isn't itself a language, rather it's a runtime environment. You can use a variety of scripting languages to write ASP, the main ones being JScript and VBScript. We also set Option Explicit; this means that we need to declare our variables and is good practice.

```
<%@LANGUAGE = "VBSCRIPT"%>
<%Option Explicit%>
<%
```

2 We now declare the variables that will be used for the connection and recordset objects and the SQL string.

```
Dim conn, rsCards, strSQL
```

3 Open a connection to the database. We are using a type of connection string called an 'OLE DB connection'. The path to the postcards.mdb file must be edited to the location of your database.

```
Set conn = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
conn.Open "Provider=Microsoft.Jet.OLEDB.4.0;" & _
            "Data Source=C:\1Databases\dbPostcards.mdb;"  & _
                  "Jet OLEDB:Database"
```

4 Begin the HTML document as usual.

```
%><!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>Select your Postcard</title>
<link href="postcards.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="content">
<h1>Select a postcard</h1>
<p>Choose one of the postcards below then click the 'select card' button to add your
message.</p>
```

5 When you get to the place in the document where you want to display your postcards, create a recordset. The recordset contains the data from tblPostcards. To get the correct data we pass an SQL string (strSQL) to the database, which returns the date to our recordset.

```
<%Set rsCards = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Recordset")
strSQL = "SELECT * FROM tblPostcards"
rsCards.open strSQL, conn
```

6 Check that there is data in the recordset and then create the form in which the postcards will be displayed.

```
if Not rsCards.eof Then%>
<form method="post" action="">
<ul id="cardlist">
```

7 Using a Do...While loop, we loop through each row in the recordset and display the card. To display the card we know that all cards are in the folder Postcards, so you simply need to write out the filename (postcardLocation) in the image tag. After each card is a radiobutton. The value of postcardID is written as the value of this radiobutton, which means that we know which card the user selected by the value passed from this form.

```
<%Do While Not rsCards.eof%>
<li><img src="postcards/<%=rsCards("postcardLocation")%>" alt="<%=rsCards("postcardTitle")%>" />
<br /><input type="radio" name="postcardID" value="<%=rsCards("postcardID")%>" /> Select this
card</li>
<%rsCards.MoveNext
loop
%>
</ul>
<p class="clear"><input type="submit" value="Select Card" /></p>
</form>
```

8 If the recordset is empty we display a message.

```
<%else%>
<p>There are currently no cards available for selection.</p>

<%end if
```

9 It is important to close recordset and connection objects after they have been used. This conserves memory on the server.

```
rsCards.close
Set rsCards = Nothing
conn.close
Set conn = Nothing%>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

THE EXPERT: PHILIP BENNISON
Philp has been working in new media for nearly a decade, and has been writing coding tutorials for the past six years. Over his careers, he has worked on everything from blue-chip corporate Web sites to small business eCommerce enterprises. When not coding, he says you can find him amusing himself by hitting people with swords and playing Scrabble.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Learn how to manipulate the server file system using PHP

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
30 minutes

INTERACTING WITH THE FILE SYSTEM IN PHP

Learn how to view directories, move and delete files, update your system and manipulate your server's file system using PHP

Every server-side script you code goes some way to giving you far more power than merely outputting dynamic HTML and accessing databases. They are also able to affect the file system of your server, allowing you to read the contents of a directory, view file information, create new directories and even upload new files to the server.

The ability to interact with your server's file system is an extremely useful technique. If you decide to store information in text files or XML files, the ability to move these files around, store them in a directory structure and delete them when you're finished with them can be invaluable. Equally, if you are allowing users to upload pictures, text files or any other kind of file, you'll need to be able to place them where they can be easily found.

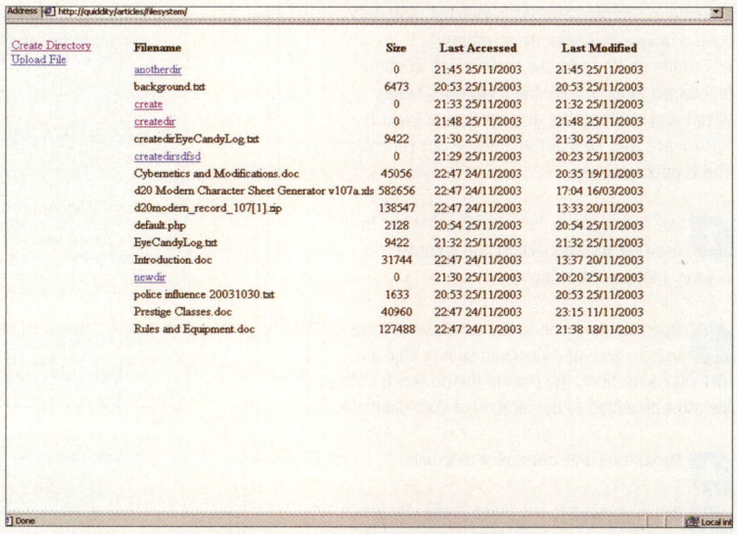
This month we'll be concentrating on the techniques used to scan a directory, and some of the security issues necessary to limit the user's access to certain parts of the site. Next month's tutorial will deal with uploading files, creating directories and more practical, hands-on techniques.

PHP has a number of functions that allow you to explore the directory structure of your Web server. The first thing you have to do is access the directory itself using the opendir() function. We need to feed this the directory that's going to be opened – a string of text pinpointing the exact location of the directory on the server. In our script we've used "./testdir" as our root directory, but you may want to be more specific when you code your version of the script. Once the directory is open and the result placed in a variable, we can use this variable inside the readir() function to cycle through the contents of the directory and display them one after the other.

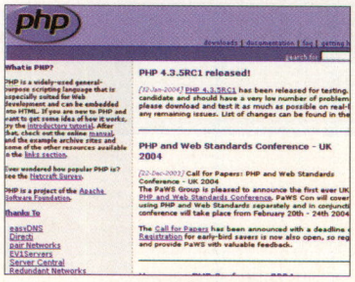
Using this technique to give someone access to the file system of your server shouldn't be undertaken lightly. Most of the techniques demonstrated here are shown, so you can use them invisibly within your script. If you create an interface to allow users to create directories, upload files and generally mess around with your server, you should be extremely careful to limit their access (as well as password-protecting the pages that allow them to do this).

One issue of security you should pay particular attention to is allowing users to upload files. If the user uploads the wrong kind of file (whether maliciously or in error) it can cause all sorts of problems, ranging from viruses through to taking up too much system memory. It is also possible for hackers to use this loophole to upload their own scripts and gain access to parts of your server you wouldn't want to make public. If you decide to allow users to upload files, limit the type of file that can be uploaded (as shown in the script opposite) to harmless file types.

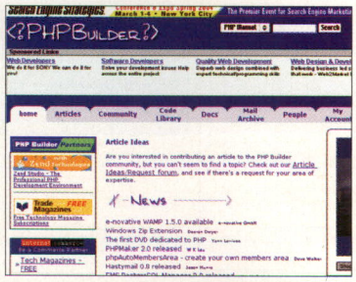
With this in mind, you should be able to use the techniques demonstrated wisely, and give yourself complete control over the files on your server.



Our script lists all the files and subdirectories in the selected directory



As ever, you can pick up a wealth of PHP-related information at **www.php.com**



If you're building a site in PHP, then you'll find nowhere better than **www.phpbuilder.com**

CODING TIP

CREATING, DELETING AND MOVING FILES

It might become necessary to create a new file, delete an old file or move a current file on your server. There are a number of commands that allow you to do this.

The touch() function either creates a file (if one does not already exist) or changes the time the file was last modified. The function needs the path of the file as a parameter, and will accept a time stamp as a second parameter, which will set the last time the file was modified. On the other hand, the unlink() function is used to delete files. It takes the path of the file as a parameter.

The copy() function copies a file from one location to another, and the rename() function renames a file and moves it from one location to another. Both files take two parameters, the first being the path of the current file, and the second being the new path, indicating where you wish to copy or move the file.

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Are you ready to start getting involved with PHP? Good. Let's begin:

1 Create a new text file named 'browse.php' and copy in the code. The first part of the script gets the current directory and ensures it is formatted correctly (using the substr and strlen functions to detect backslashes and insert or remove them as appropriate). The $basedir variable contains the location of the base directory. The user shouldn't be able to access any directories higher than this one, limiting their access to the area you've designated. We use a strstr() function to test to see if ".." is in the $directory variable (a technique the user might try and use to access a directory higher than the one we created for them).

```
<html><head><title>Browse Directory</title></head>
<style> td { vertical-align:top; } </style><body>
<?      $basedir = "./testdir";
        if (!$_POST['dir']) $directory = $_GET['dir'];
        else $directory = $_POST['dir'];
        if (substr($directory, strlen($directory) - 1, 1) == "/") {
$directory = substr($directory, 0, strlen($directory) - 1); }
        if (substr($directory, 0, 1) != "/") {  $directory = "/".$directory; }
        if (strstr($directory, "..")) {
echo "Sorry, but you can not access that directory";
exit; }
        $currentdir = $basedir.$directory;
```

2 Next, we open the directory we wish to browse using the opendir() function. If the directory is unavailable, it will return false, and we will be able to show an error message. Otherwise, it will place the directory array in the $dir variable. The next chunk of code is basic HTML (the $msg variable is an error message which will be produced by the createdir.php and uploadfile.php scripts we'll be working on next month).

```
        @ $dir = opendir($currentdir);
        if (!$dir) {
                echo "<b>The directory you are requesting is currently
unavailable.</b>"; }
        else { ?>
<table><tr><td width=150>
<a href='createdir.php?dir=<? echo $directory; ?>'>Create Directory</a><br>
<a href='uploadfile.php?dir=<? echo $directory; ?>'>Upload File</a>
</td><td>
        <b><? echo $msg; ?></b>
        <table>
<tr style='font-weight:bold; text-align:center;'>
<td width=150 style='text-align:left;'>Filename</td>
<td width=50>Size</td>
<td width=150>Last Accessed</td>
<td width=150>Last Modified</td>
</tr>
```

3 Now we start browsing through the list of files and subdirectories in our directory. This is done using the readdir() function. Each time we feed the $dir variable to this function, it cycles through each file or subdirectory in the current directory. We test each file to find out if it's a subdirectory (using the is_dir() function). If it's a file, we output the file's name (stored in the $file variable), the size of the file (using the filesize() function), the last time the file was accessed (using the fileatime() variable) and the last time the file was modified (using the filemtime() function). If the file is a subdirectory, we need to test to see if it's a normal subdirectory (in which case we output the same as above, creating a link so we can move down the directory structure) or the parent directory. If it's the parent directory, we need to know if we can let the user access it or if it's the highest directory we want to give them access to. Simply make sure the $currentdir variable isn't the same as the $basedir variable. The users should then be able to browse around the directory we've made for them without being able to access anything they shouldn't. Close the page with the relevant HTML tags and save it.

```
                <?
                        while ($file = readdir($dir)) {
                                $filepath = $currentdir."/".$file;
                                echo "<tr align='center'>";
                                if (!is_dir($currentdir."/".$file)) {
                                        echo "<td
align='left'>".$file."</td>";
                                        echo
"<td>".filesize($filepath)."</td>";
                                        echo "<td>".date("H:i j/m/Y",
fileatime($filepath))."</td>";
                                        echo "<td>".date("H:i j/m/Y",
filemtime($filepath))."</td>"; }
                                if (is_dir($currentdir."/".$file) && $file !=
".") {
                                        if ($file == ".." && $currentdir !=
$basedir."/") {
                                                $newdir =
substr($directory, 0, strrpos($directory, "/"));
  echo "<td align='left'><a href='default.php?dir=".$newdir."/'><b>Parent
Directory</b></a></td>"; }
                                        elseif ($file != "..") {
  echo "<td align='left'><a href='default.php?dir=".$directory.
"/".$file."/'>".$file."</a></td>";
                                                echo
"<td>".filesize($filepath)."</td>";
                                                echo "<td>".date("H:i
j/m/Y", fileatime($filepath))."</td>";
                                                echo "<td>".date("H:i
j/m/Y", filemtime($filepath))."</td>"; } }
                                echo "</tr>";
                        }
                ?>
        </table>
</td></tr></table>
<? } ?></body></html>
```

Gallery

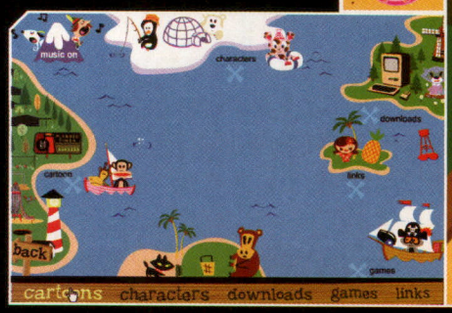
PAUL FRANK

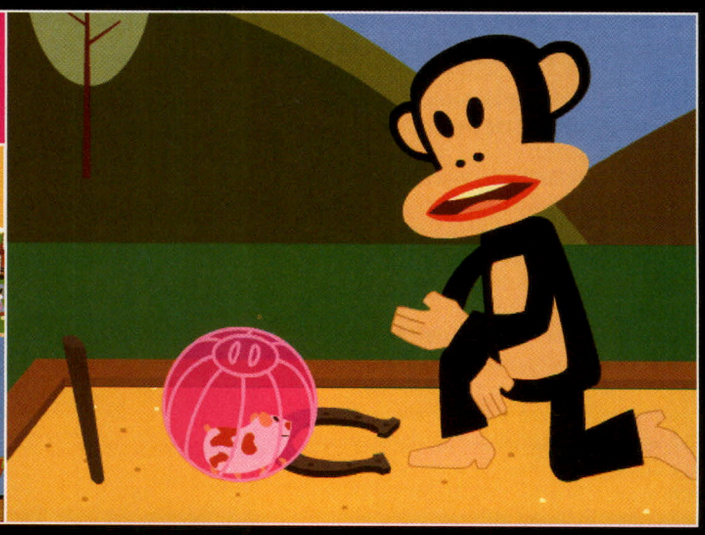
Name: Paul Frank Industries
URL: www.paulfrank.com
Designed by: Paul Frank

It hasn't taken too long for the fashion industry to cotton on to what Web promotion can do for its products. This site for the incredibly hip Paul Frank Industries, which has found huge success with quirky garments and cute accessories, boasts incredible content that encapsulates the brand so cleverly. A bevy of Flash techniques not only have you entering virtual boutiques to find out more about the company, but also include colourful dynamic menus and even short animations. Julius the monkey and his woodland buddies are the stars here, and it's their strong identities that really make this site a winner.

TOON ARMY

Navigating through Paul Frank's online world is achieved by guiding Julius around in a little boat. Here you can find games and downloads, while a series of hugely entertaining cartoons can also be viewed.





SUBMISSIONS

SEND YOUR SITES TO US

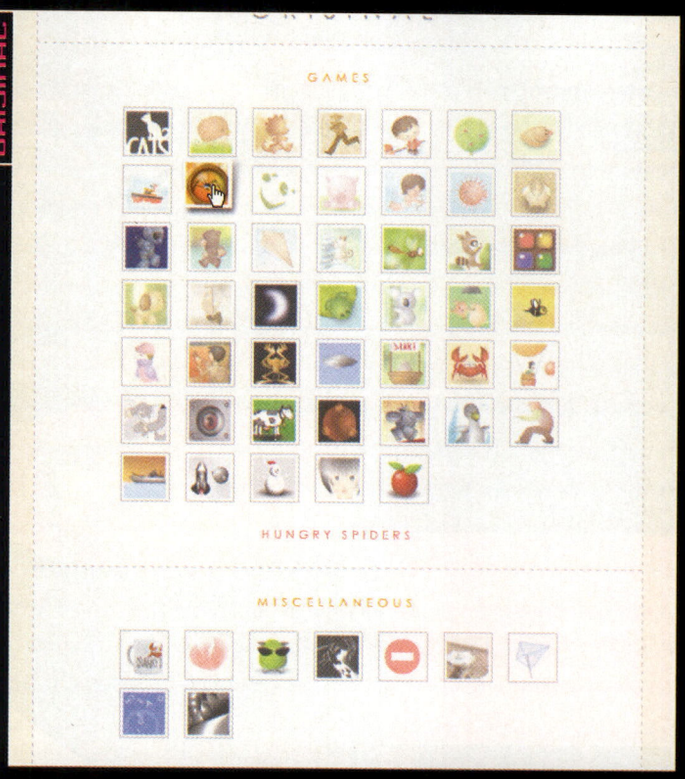
Have you got a site or a piece of artwork you've created that you'd like to see featured on these pages? If you're reading this thinking that you've done better, please drop us a line and we'll showcase your work to our like-minded readers. It doesn't matter if you're a Flash guru or a Photoshop master – as long as you've created something cool and visually appealing, we'll cover your work in here. Who knows what it could lead to?

CONTACT:

Practical Internet Web Designer
Highbury Entertainment Limited,
Paragon House,
St Peters Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

Email: webdesigner@paragon.co.uk

ORISINAL



Name: Orisinal
URL: www.orisinal.com
Designed by: Ferry Halim

Many online Flash games used to be hackneyed versions of Pong or Tetris, but times have changed. Most are seen as art forms, with many top sites realising that this kind of interactive content can be invaluable for keeping visitors interested. Ferry Halim's superb Orisinal has an impressive array of fun-filled games, all with a unique look and feel. The pastel tones and lovingly illustrated characters make for a charming experience that would seem suited to children – but the games can prove tricky, and with a further collection available through Ferry's portfolio pages, this is must-see stuff for all.

GREAT GAMES

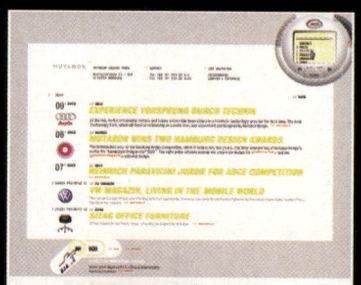
Orisinal excels at delivering cutesy characters in simple games that are easy to pick up yet challenging at the same time. Each one is really nicely illustrated and demonstrates just how effective this kind of content can be.

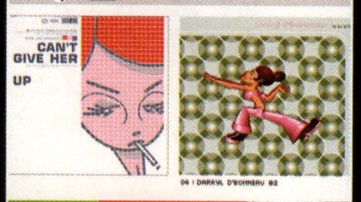
Name: Mutabor Design
URL: www.mutabor.de
Designed by: Mutabor

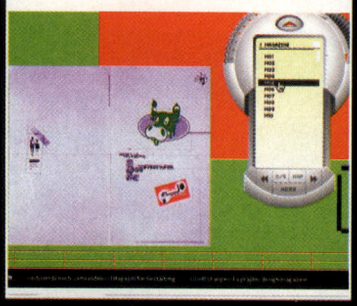
What makes this design company's home page so distinctive is its revolutionary approach to site navigation. While basic content for viewing work portfolios can be accessed with traditional links, a free-floating menu component is used to move around the site. It also manages to look strikingly like a skinned version of Windows Media Player, featuring dynamic buttons and animated menus, and can be conveniently repositioned about the page. Perhaps the greatest achievement, however, is the way the menu retains focus above the page and does not vanish into the background.

main menu

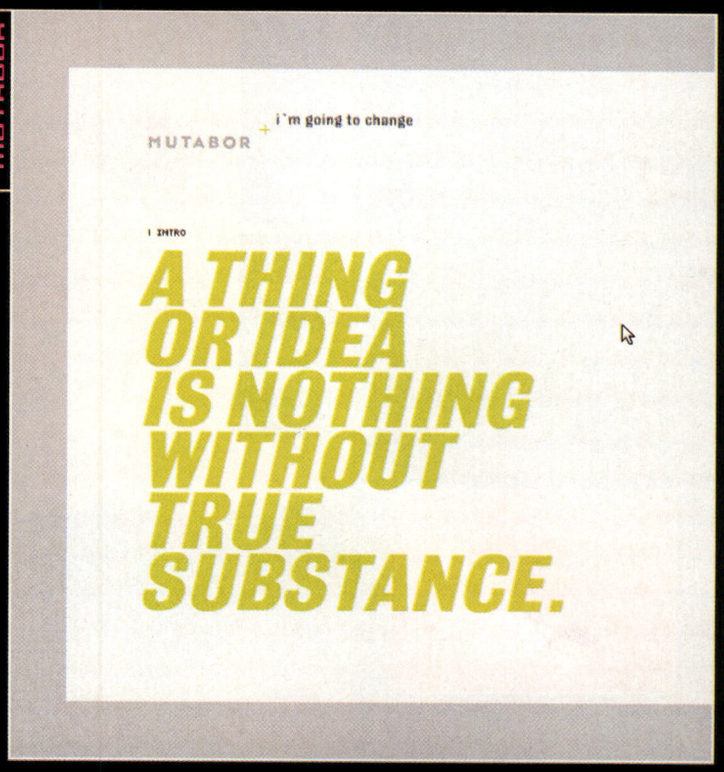
Giving your site's menu system an interactive twist can be a clever way to get the visitor's attention. In these pictures you can see how the floating component has links for loading content into the page behind.



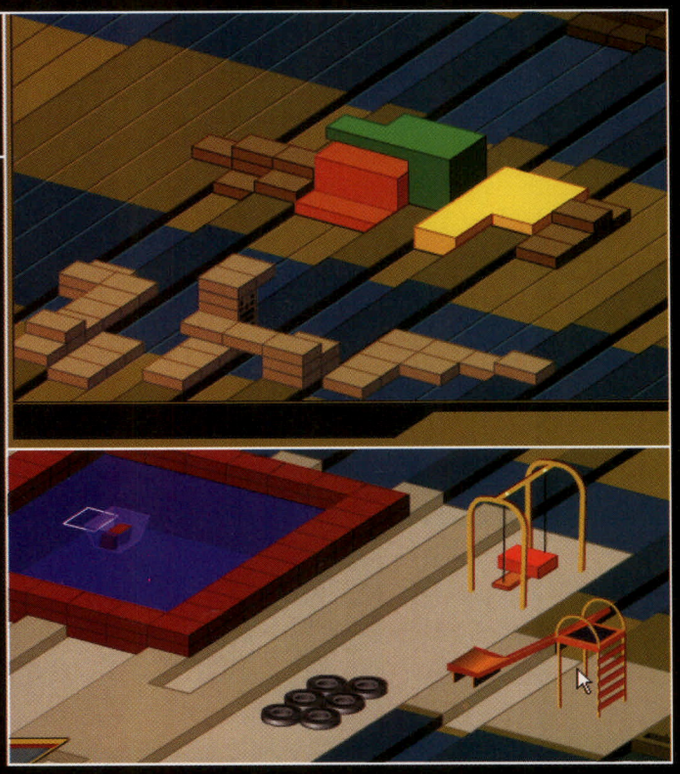




MUTABOR



WARD 7



Name: Ward 7
URL: www.ward7.co.uk
Designed by: Ward 7

If ever there was an example of style over content, this Ward 7 site might be a candidate. This is by no means a slur on the design agency behind it, but rather says more about just how attractive and innovative the main interface is. The usual links to corporate information, work portfolios and contact details have been thoughtfully wrapped up in an interactive menu structure that really works. A customisable track-like area features tessellating blocks that drag like faders on a mixing desk, while plates of food and graffiti-daubed trains trundle into view.

PRETTY FACE

There isn't any reason why the traditional structure of a Web page can't be hidden behind a more exciting exterior. This interface from Ward 7 uses colourful and animated objects to not only select content but deliver it as well.

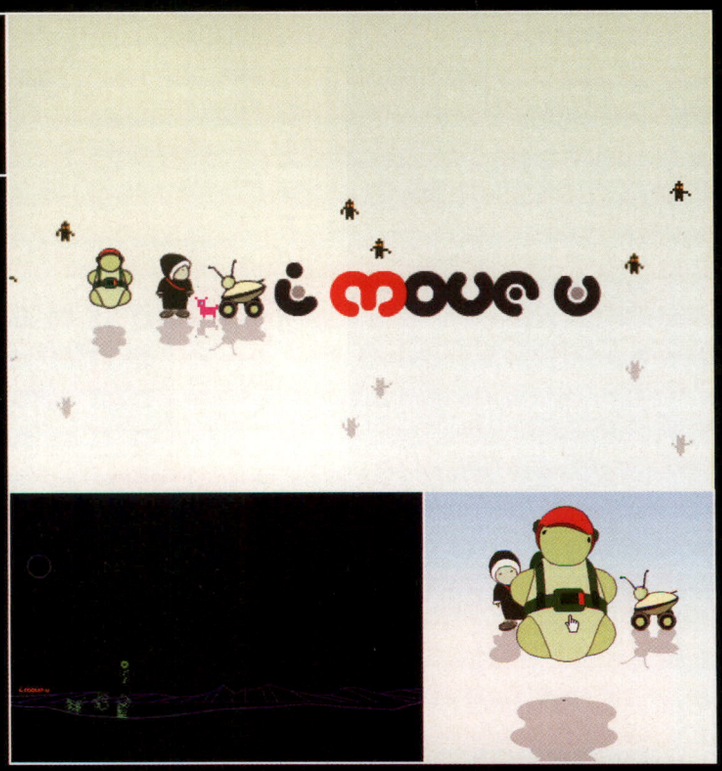
Name: I Move U
URL: Dentsu, Aoi
Designed by: Dentsu, Aoi Advertising Promotion, Hi-Res!

This somewhat odd promotional site for Mitsubishi seems to be aimed specifically at the Japanese market, but does make for an intriguing visit. Although its actual message or aim remains unclear, the title ties in with its wholly interactive content to good effect. With very little instruction or explanation, your choice of strange animated character is propelled through a series of abstract 'worlds' via the arrow keys. Flash sequences and free wallpapers appear along the way, and if nothing else, it certainly represents a wacky take on brand marketing.

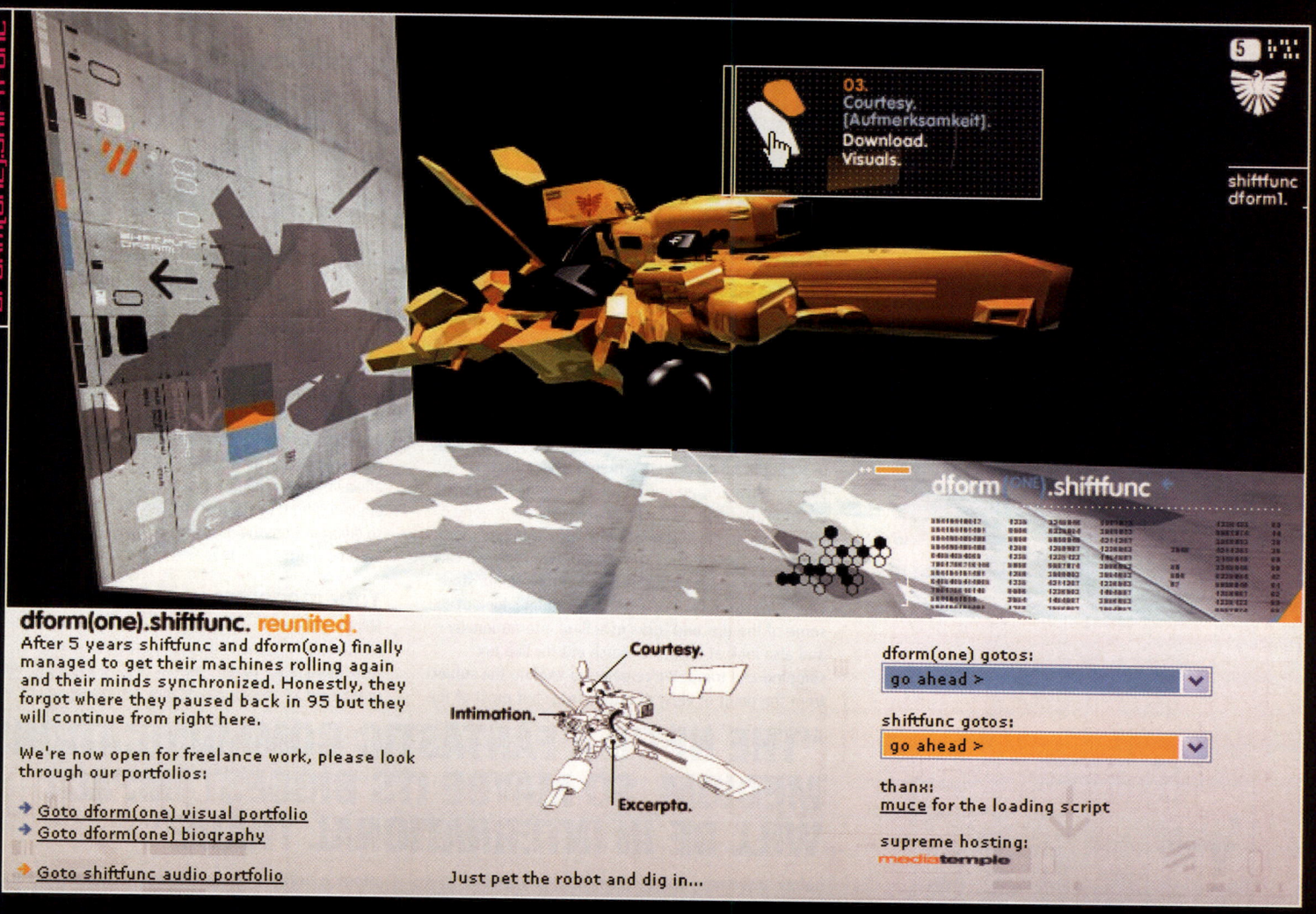
MOVE YOURSELF

Novelty-packed navigation can prove to be the basis for the site's content or purpose. I Move U's premise is to guide a chosen character through short interactive levels, and as a result conveys a highly abstract marketing message.

I MOVE U



DFORM(ONE).SHIFTFUNC

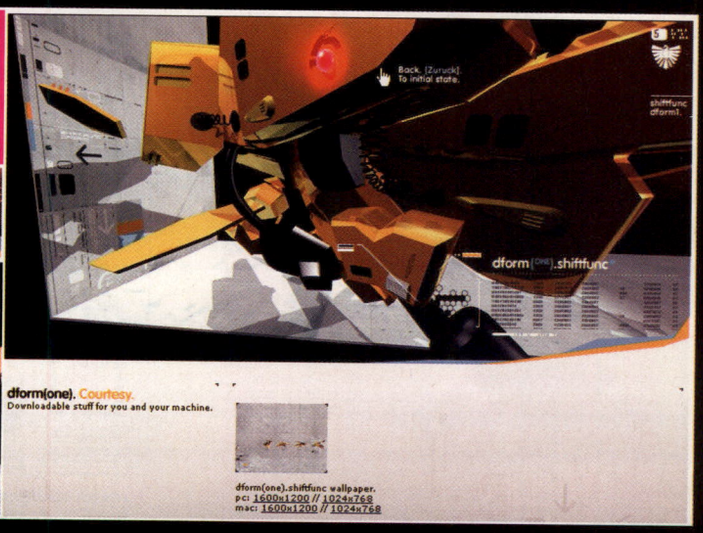


Name: dform(one).shiftfunc
URL: www.dform1shiftfunc.net
Designed by: Anders Schroder

Probably the most unfortunate aspect of this 2Mb site is the length of time it takes to load, undoubtedly prompting many to turn away prematurely. Those in the know however, will see this wait as added anticipation for some truly awesome audio and 3D content. All produced by international freelancer Anders Schroder, it features a navigation system based around an animated spacecraft and all manner of sci-fi-inspired Flash work. The rendering, lighting and shadow effects are a sight to behold, while the concise information about the author provides nice insight into a genuine talent.

CRAFTY CUTS

The use of 3D animation can add real novelty to the workings of a site. This brilliant model of a spacecraft carries hotspots which can be clicked to view new sections of content, while changing the look and sound of the background.



ECOMMERCE

eCOMMERCE

WEB TRADING

Profiting on the Web

Making cash from your Web site is a common goal throughout the wired world. From multinational conglomerates through to one man band craft-makers, the ideal is the same: converting visitors into buyers.

The eCommerce section in *Practical Internet Web Designer* is designed specifically for people aiming to turn clicks into pounds (or dollars, or yen). This means that every month, we provide essential information for the decision-makers who shape their businesses' future.

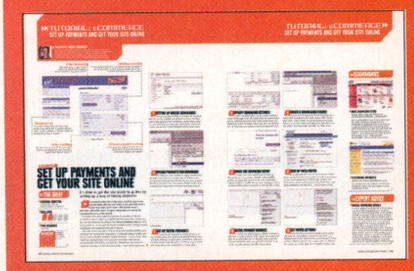
eBusiness is much more than selling your wares online, though, which is why we also strive to include tips and tricks for anyone who is keen to get their business or design portfolio online.

IN THIS ISSUE'S eCOMMERCE SECTION

Trading internationally 98
Chris Barling of Actinic talks you through some of the key things you should be looking out for before selling to interational customers

Set up payments and get online 102
In the fifth part of our tutorial, we show you how to set up your site to receive payments

Web hosting deals 110
Pick yourself the perfect Web hosting deal with our comprehensive listings section



Build yourself that killer eCommerce site you've always wanted in the fifth part of our tutorial series

CONTACT US:

Do you have a topic you'd like to see covered in eCommerce? Get in touch at:

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Paragon House,
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Email: webdesigner@paragon.co.uk

HOW TO SUCCEED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADING

To succeed on the international trading stage, you need to make sure you're aware of the rules and regulations. Chris Barling of Actinic did some investigating and come up with the following sound advice...

The world is a multi-cultural place, filled with a myriad of different customs, traditions and expectations. When the concept of Net trading first raised its head several years ago, the temptation in the UK was to concentrate solely on the 60 million or so potential customers within Britain's shores. Slowly, however, an important point began to dawn on an increasingly savvy populace – once someone takes their credit card out to buy something, no one much cares where they come from. From this we can take it as read that most people with an online store would like to make overseas sales. So let's look at some of the tips and tricks of selling internationally – and also look at things to watch out for like tax, shipping and fraud. We're going to explore the subject from the point of view of British sites, but most of the points raised here will be relevant to any kind of international trading.

The first point to make is that people selling from the UK have an advantage. Surprising as it is to the people who live there, the UK still has an excellent reputation around the world. So if you've got it we should flaunt it. The first thing to note, therefore, is that you should clearly let the buyers know that you're based in the UK.

Above all else, the Net is a fantastic communications medium, so maybe its biggest impact is going to be in the area of international trade. The good news is that much of the same expertise needed to get visitors from the UK to check out your site, in search engine optimisation (SEO) and pay-per-click advertising (PPC), can be equally effective in attracting overseas visitors. Yet this can all be organised from the comfort of your own office chair. This is so different from the past, and overseas marketing has become much easier than was ever thought possible.

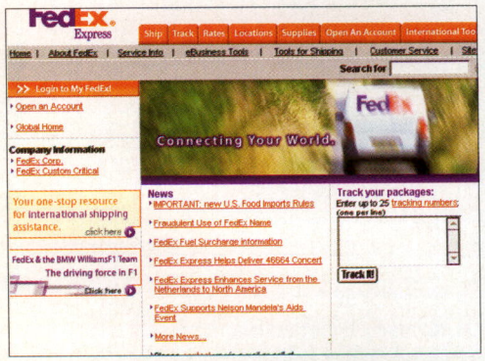
Your money or your life

Shipping abroad is surprisingly easy. Many eCommerce merchants do it, and without any problems. Using recognised major carriers such as UPS, FedEx or DHL will greatly reduce problems, and they can advise you of any issues. A customs declaration must be completed, but this should not pose a problem as long as what you are selling is not illegal in the country that you're sending it to!

Taxing your goods abroad is a whole different matter, however. Like every area of business these days, eCommerce is surrounded by a maze of red tape, rules and regulations. Here we will look at the international dimension. The tips on tax issues shouldn't be taken as

"THE NET'S A FANTASTIC COMMUNICATIONS MEDIUM, SO MAYBE ITS BIGGEST IMPACT WILL BE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE"

www.botham.co.uk has a secure shopping facility, so ordering food hampers to send abroad is perfectly safe



Using a major carrier such as FedEx to ship your goods abroad will greatly reduce any chance of problems

EXPERT TIPS AND TRICKS

EXPERT TIPS

- Translate your Web pages into various foreign tongues with translation services like Babel Fish, available at **www.altavista.com**.
- Many shoppers are reassured, and therefore much more likely to shell out their cash, if the site they're visiting is registered in their own country. With this in mind, it's well worth setting up domain names in France, Germany and so on.
- Always be slightly more suspicious of accounts set up using free Webmail accounts, as these are the services used by many fraudsters.
- If you're selling throughout Europe, make sure you display your prices in Euros as well as pounds.
- Always check out the VAT rules in any countries you intend to trade in.

definitive – it's your job to comply with the law – but they will form a good place to start.

From a tax viewpoint, the world is divided into two camps: countries in the European Union and those outside the EU. Generally speaking, when you sell into the EU you charge VAT at your usual rate. But there are some exceptions. Not many people know this, but if your online store is wildly successful and you are starting to turn over serious bucks selling into other EU countries, you hit some additional regulations. If you exceed the individual VAT threshold for Germany, France, etc, you should charge VAT at the appropriate country VAT rate when selling into that country – not the usual UK 17.5% rate.

If your customer is a non-UK business in the EU and is registered for VAT in their own country, they are allowed to quote their VAT registration number to you in order to be exempted from tax. If you can't accommodate this, those customers are likely to look elsewhere.

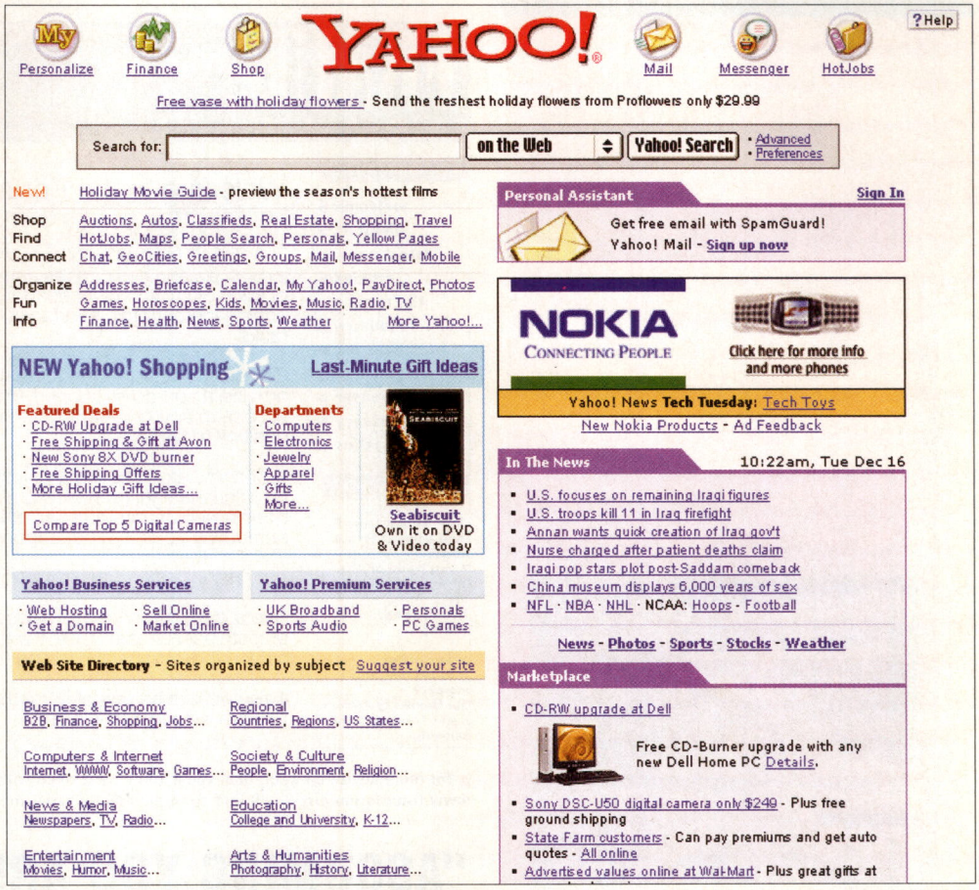
It's not the same when handling US buyers. US states might want to charge sales tax on your sales, but it's their responsibility. You don't have to charge this 'use tax' – which is between the buyer and the state where they live. So as a UK business you can sell into the US tax free.

It's your duty

Most of the retail world leaves customs or import duties to the purchaser. They are responsible for any of these charges, so you can ignore them. However, it is worth saying explicitly in your terms and conditions that any charges are down to the buyer.

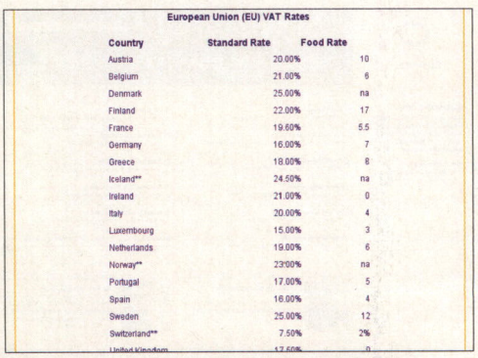
For wholesale trade sales there are different procedures, so you would need to investigate these if you are operating in this field.

If you're on holiday in Spain, have a meal out and pay by credit card, the restaurant will be paid in Euros. Your card company will automatically translate this into pounds and that is what will appear on your statement, with the original currency and amount as a small note item. When people buy across the Net, the principle is the same. They can pay by credit card and you'll be paid in sterling, but the



Be slightly wary of Webmail sign-up addresses, as many fraudsters use this tactic

Search engine optimisation can be very effective in attracting overseas visitors (and potential customers) to your site



European Union (EU) VAT Rates

Country	Standard Rate	Food Rate
Austria	20.00%	10
Belgium	21.00%	6
Denmark	25.00%	na
Finland	22.00%	17
France	19.60%	5.5
Germany	16.00%	7
Greece	18.00%	8
Iceland**	24.50%	na
Ireland	21.00%	0
Italy	20.00%	4
Luxembourg	15.00%	3
Netherlands	19.00%	6
Norway**	23.00%	na
Portugal	17.00%	5
Spain	16.00%	4
Sweden	25.00%	12
Switzerland**	7.50%	2%
United Kingdom	17.60%	0

If you're very successful and exceed the VAT threshold for some EU countries, you need to charge VAT at that country's rate

Pick up some essential eCommerce help with the help of the excellent ecommerce-guide.com (**ecommerce.internet.com**)

The Economist knows its stuff, and the EIU (**www.eiu.com**) aims to teach you about trading conditions internationally

BAKING FOR BRITAIN

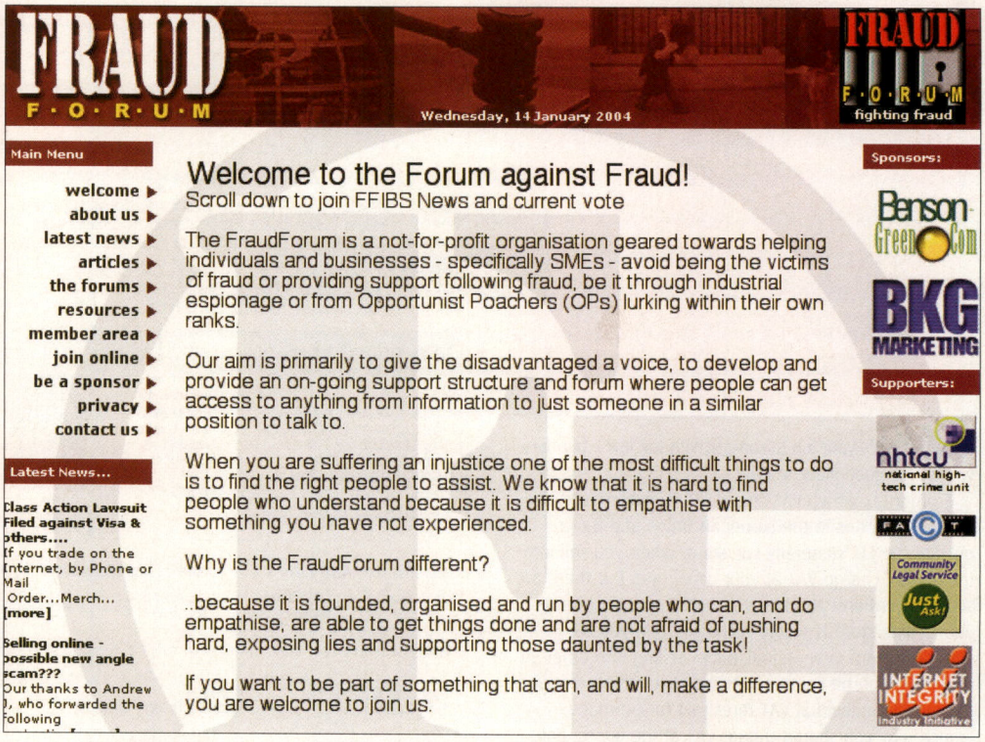
MICHAEL JARMAN

Michael Jarman is the owner of traditional bakers, Elizabeth Botham & Sons (www.botham.co.uk). He's an eCommerce veteran selling food hampers internationally and fresh bread and cakes locally. He chose Actinic to build his online store because it provides a complete solution: catalogue, cart, security and order processing. Actinic's end-to-end security for credit card details means he can offer a very secure shopping facility.

It took two to three weeks to set up the online store, which is hosted by Onyx Internet (www.onyx.net). Orders are protected by Actinic's encryption and then downloaded and processed in-house using a PDQ system. Michael reckons shipping overseas via ParcelForce is as easy as UK deliveries. However, you have to be aware of local food regulations – eg Australia bans the import of lemon curd because it's an egg-based product, so a substitute is required, like marmalade.

Michael is always ultra-cautious about orders from Eastern European countries – based on actual experience. He always rings the bank to check the card number, and more often than not the card is declined. Gut feeling is used to spot fraud and dodgy credit card orders – for example, where an order is for multiple hampers to one address when it's usual to only order one as a gift.

A combination of culinary flair, good business sense and intuition has led to Michael Jarman's success



For more advice on fraud than you'll know what to do with, pop along to the appropriately-named Fraud Forum at www.fraudforum.org. You'll find up to the minute news, message boards and a whole lot more, and all based around fraud

payment will be translated into their local currency when it appears on their statement. So there's no need for a multi-currency system in your Web store. However, it is useful to have a conversion facility so you can provide an indicative amount in a prospective buyer's local currency.

Fraud is possibly the biggest problem to consider when selling abroad. Unfortunately it's true that orders from some countries seem to be much more likely to be fraudulent. Generally, ones from Western Europe and North America are the safest.

Orders from abroad are more likely to be from scamsters simply because it's easier for them to get away with it. Generally, the police are not particularly interested in small-scale fraud, and even less so when the crime is committed outside their jurisdiction.

You've been scammed

There are a number of ways that fraud can be experienced. If the buyer was using stolen credit card details, the amount is likely to be charged back to you once the true owner becomes aware of the charge. The goods, of course, are long gone. Even someone who genuinely ordered and received the goods can dispute the charge. As a merchant, it's hard to resist charge-backs, and there's virtually no comeback for you.

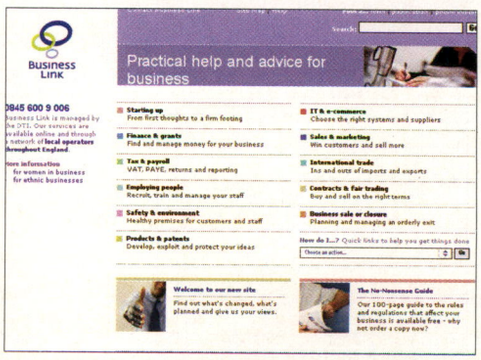
There are a number of tricks to avoiding fraudulent orders. Some indicators of fraud are that the buyer tends to use the most expensive shipping method, they tend to choose the most expensive products, and they tend to use free email addresses such as Yahoo or Hotmail.

Some of the ways to check whether an order is fraudulent are: ask for a fax of a copy of the back strip of the credit card; ask for proof of name and address to be faxed; make a call to ensure that the phone number is genuine. Most fraudsters give up at the first hurdle and you don't hear from them again.

Finally, assuming that you are legal and decent, let the world know. Anything that adds to your credibility will help online – so it's a good idea to list all the things you have done under the heading 'We comply with the following legal and tax regulations'.

"ASSUMING YOU ARE LEGAL AND DECENT, LET THE WORLD KNOW. ANYTHING THAT ADDS TO YOUR CREDIBILITY WILL HELP"

Boasting masses of eCommerce information, IDC (www.idc.com) has plenty of advice on international selling



Get yourself a host of eCommerce advice from a British perspective at Business Link (www.businesslink.gov.uk)

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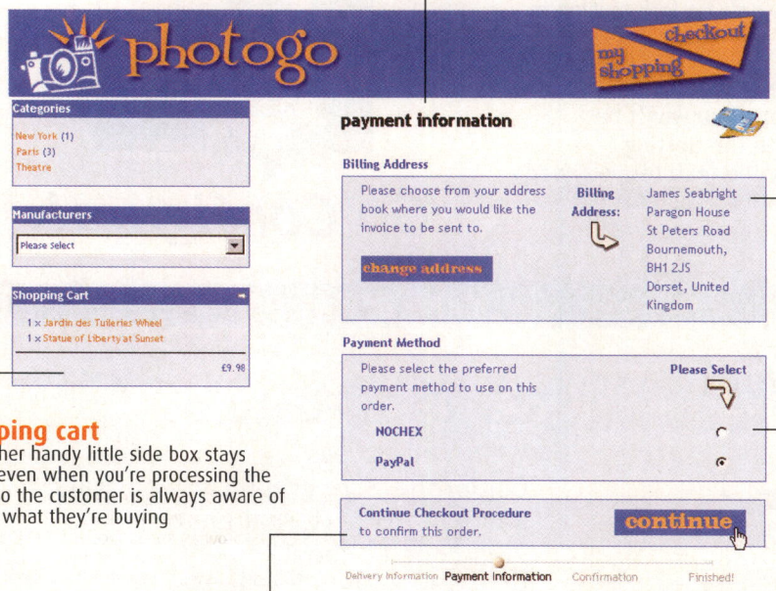
TUTORIAL: eCOMMERCE
SET UP PAYMENTS AND GET YOUR SITE ONLINE

THE EXPERT: JAMES SEABRIGHT

James is a freelance Web designer and writer who specialises in hand coding. He is a former Technical Editor of *Practical Internet*, and has been writing for the magazine since 1997. We picked James to write the eCommerce tutorial because, spanning ten issues, it will call upon many aspects of Web design – and with his experience and multitude of skills, James was the perfect choice.

Order processing
The main focus of this issue's tutorial is about what happens when customers buy your product

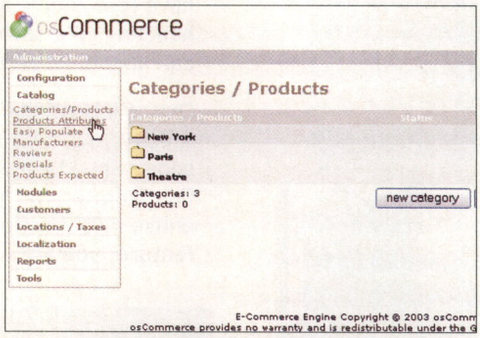
Customer accounts
It's a standard feature of osCommerce that customers set up accounts, so their address details are on file for each and every order they make



Shopping cart
This rather handy little side box stays visible even when you're processing the order, so the customer is always aware of exactly what they're buying

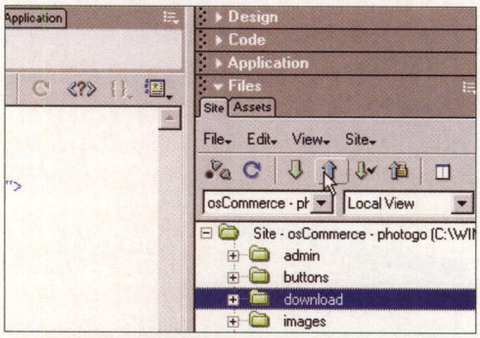
Order handling
We look at each step of the ordering process, including how you manage orders once they're placed

External payment systems
In this issue we explore how to set up connections to external payment processing systems like PayPal



1 SETTING UP DIGITAL DOWNLOADS

To make a product available for delivery via download, first add it to the catalogue as explained last issue, and then make some settings in the osCommerce Admin control panel. Use your Web browser to open the control panel. Click on the Catalog link then the Product Attributes link as shown above.



4 UPLOAD PRODUCTS FOR DOWNLOAD

Place files you want available for digital download into the folder you've just created, then click the folder in your Dreamweaver Site panel and click the blue Up arrow to upload the files to the Web server. The download folder on the server is protected by osCommerce to prevent unauthorised access.

PART FIVE

SET UP PAYMENTS AND GET YOUR SITE ONLINE

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Customise the order and payment system in osCommerce

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
90 minutes

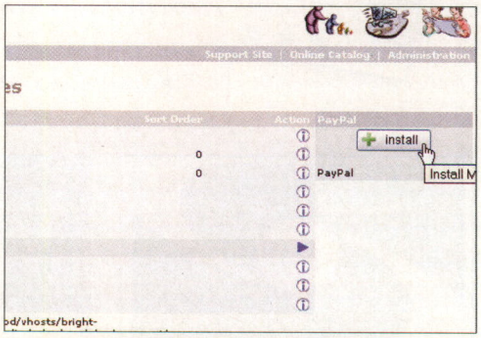
ON THE DISC
eCommerce/ Tutorial files: easy_populate_2.62-m.1

It's time to get the site ready to go live by setting up a way of taking payments

As promised at the start of this series, you'll be ready to put your site online and take real orders by the end of this issue's step-by-step guide. Don't worry – that doesn't mean a premature end to the series, as there's plenty more to cover in the remaining five parts of the tutorial.

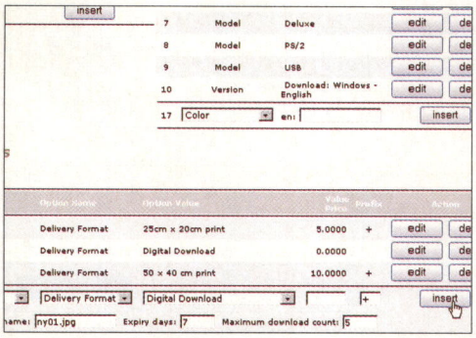
For newcomers, we've spent the past four issues setting up the free osCommerce system, which is a sophisticated framework for an eCommerce site. You can download the software from **www.oscommerce.com** and try to catch up with us – we've used the Simple Template System and Easy Populate contributions also available at that site to help us.

This issue covers three topics: how to set up downloadable products, how to activate the osCommerce connection to an external payment system, and how to send out email newsletters to your customers – once you have some! There's no mystery behind how to put your site online, unless you've password-protected it during development. The mystery is to how to get customers and how to make them place orders – more on that next issue! ■



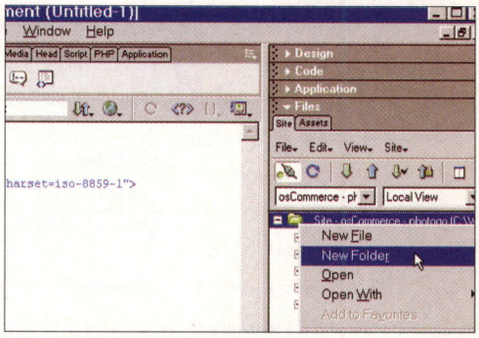
7 SET UP PAYPAL PAYMENTS

Once you've got your PayPal account set up, go to your Admin control panel, click on the Modules link and then on PayPal. Although it is listed there, it will not be active as a payment option on the site until you set it up. To get started with setup, click on the Install button as shown above.



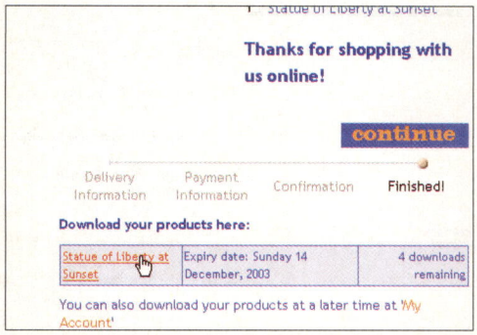
2 SPECIFY DOWNLOAD SETTINGS

To add a download option, use the Product Attributes section of the page. Select the product from the Product Name pop-up, pick Delivery Format in the Option Name menu, and Digital Download in the Option Value menu. Fill in the Filename box, set the expiry and maximum download counts; hit Insert.



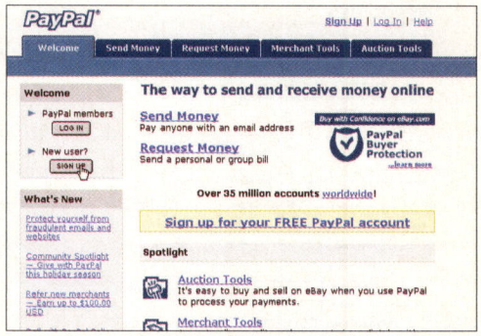
3 CREATE A DOWNLOADS FOLDER

Now you need to upload the file for download into a folder called 'Download' in the main Catalog folder of your Web server. Create a folder in your Dreamweaver local site folder: In Local View mode of the Site panel, right-click on the Site folder, select New Folder and enter the folder name.



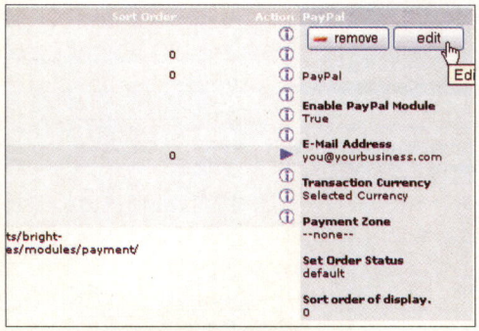
5 CHECK THE DOWNLOAD SETUP

To ensure you've set everything up correctly, go through the site as a customer and order a downloadable product. All being well, you'll reach the Order Confirmation page and will see a link like the one above, letting you initiate download of the product. Download it to check the file is intact.



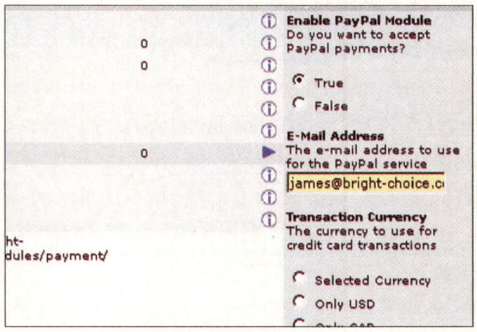
6 SIGN UP WITH PAYPAL

As an example of how to set up a payment method where you don't need a secure server or credit card merchant account, we'll activate the PayPal module installed with osCommerce. Before setting up the store side of things, visit **www.paypal.com** and sign up for a free business account.



8 ACTIVE PAYMENT MODULES

It's easy to see which payment modules are active, as they have an entry in the Sort Order column. By changing the value of the Sort Order, you can determine which payment method is listed first when users get to the checkout. To set up this and other options, click Edit as shown above.



9 SET PAYPAL OPTIONS

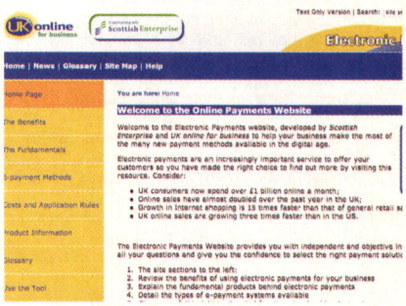
Check that True is selected in Enable PayPal Module, and enter the email address you used to sign up for your PayPal account. If you want visitors to pay using only a certain currency, select it in the list. This is a good idea, as otherwise the amount you receive depends on PayPal's exchange rates.

BOOKMARKS

DABS DOWNLOAD STORE

www.dabs.com/uk/channels/software/software_download/

Here's an example of how a major online store has added a download facility to its site. Admittedly the integration here is not great, as the actual download store is hosted via a site called Transaction One rather than dabs itself. But this does show that the downloadable product market is of growing importance, and not just in the specialist sector – Argos also offers downloadable software via the same system.



ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

www.electronic-payments.co.uk

This independent site features a tool to help businesses choose the best means of online payment available.

EXPERT ADVICE

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD DETAILS

If you're confused by all this talk of downloading instead of delivering products, let us explain. There are a lot of products which can be supplied without the transfer of physical goods between buyer and seller. Why make a customer wait to have software delivered by post when broadband connection speeds allow it to be downloaded fairly quickly? In the example of the site we're creating, why send prints of the photos to customers when perhaps they'd rather download them, saving on print and delivery costs and also getting instant access to a high resolution version of the image? Of course, not all shops will have products that can be downloaded. Also, do think about the Web hosting surcharges potentially incurred by the extra bandwidth you'll be using.

GEEK SPEAK

MERCHANT ACCOUNT

The standard way for a business to start accepting credit card payments is to apply to a bank for a merchant account. This involves a credit check on the company and normally incurs a set-up charge and monthly cost, which is often provided as part of a service bundle to include processing facilities for credit card transactions. If you are not an established company or you do not anticipate high volumes and values of transactions, it is probably best to avoid the merchant account route. The alternative is to use a service such as PayPal which allows you to use its merchant account to handle transactions. The downside is that there are more restrictions on the kind of transactions and their value. This route will often work out more expensive than a merchant account if you end up running lots of transactions through the service. See the 'In Detail' panel for a round-up of the options.

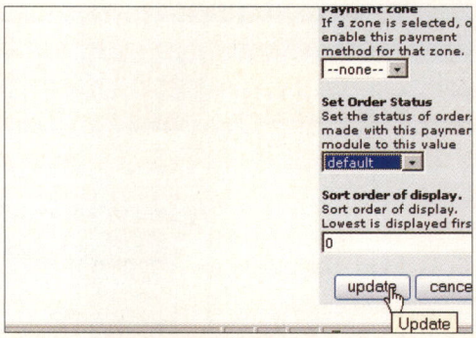
TAXABLE GOODS

As osCommerce was created mainly by developers in the USA, it has an integrated facility to allow tax to be added to goods at the checkout stage, which is the most common way of handling the American equivalent of VAT. Unless you are running a site which is particularly aimed at businesses that can reclaim the VAT on goods they purchase, it makes more sense for the catalogue prices quoted for goods and additional charges such as postage to include VAT. This means that, while the goods or services are effectively 'taxable goods', they should not be entered as such into the catalogue, or you'll end up with tax being added again at the checkout stage.

EXPERT ADVICE

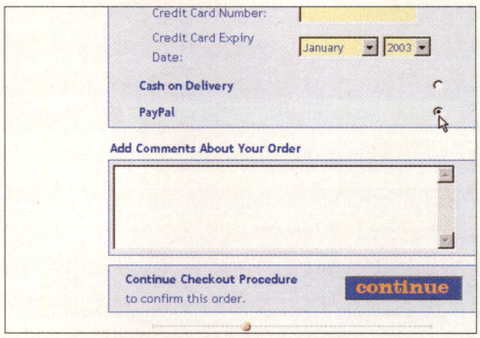
EASY POPULATE UPDATE

If you were following the tutorial last issue, you'll remember that we installed the EasyPopulate contribution, which allows you to download the product catalogue and edit it in a spreadsheet. This makes it a lot simpler to add new products to the catalogue and change the information about those that are already there, as the standard osCommerce method relies on individually entering product details through the Admin control panel. One of the drawbacks of EasyPopulate identified last issue is its lack of provision for product options, which means that you still have to resort to the Admin panel to set up colour or size options. No sooner had we said that than the contribution was updated to solve that problem. Unfortunately it doesn't provide a complete solution, as digital downloads still have to be configured via the osCommerce control panel. You can download the latest version of EasyPopulate from **www.oscommerce.com/community/contributions.**



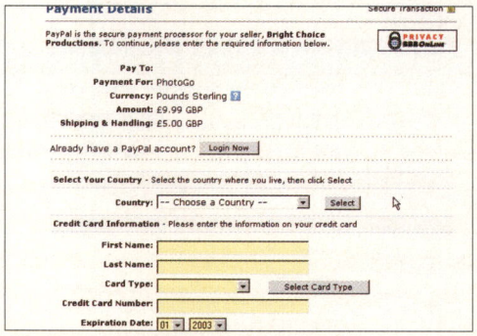
10 PAYMENT ZONE AND ORDER STATUS

If you only want to allow PayPal payments for a particular geographical area, set up a zone then select it from the first list above. Pick an option from the second menu to specify how an order paid for with PayPal will be listed in the My Account section until you process it. Click Update to finish.



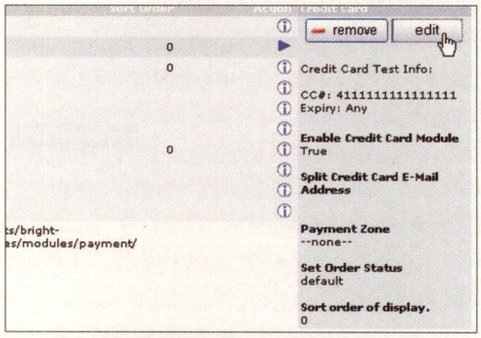
11 CHECKING PAYPAL WORKS

To ensure you've set everything up correctly, go through the order process and select PayPal once you get to the checkout page. We'll return to the Admin control panel to deactivate the other payment methods, as we don't yet have a secure server for credit cards, and COD isn't commonly used.



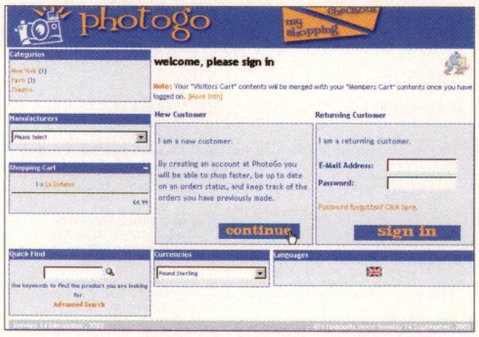
13 THE SECURE PAYPAL PAGE

You should now see your site name and the transaction amount displayed as part of a secure page at the PayPal site. Your visitors don't need to have a PayPal account, as they can just enter their details in the form. You don't need to complete this form, as you'll be charged by PayPal.



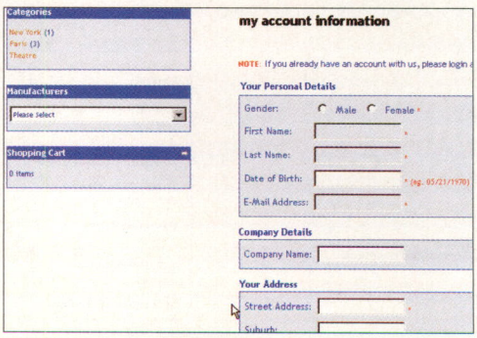
14 DEACTIVATING CARD PAYMENTS

With PayPal up and running, you can deactivate the standard osCommerce credit card payment method. It's not safe to leave that option available, as you don't have a secure server set up to transfer the sensitive card info. In the Modules section of the Admin panel, hit the Credit Card option then Edit.



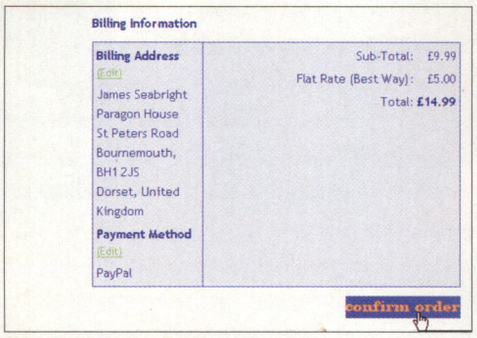
16 CUSTOMISING THE ORDER PROCESS

We'll now customise the way osCommerce deals with your customers' orders, and will progress as a visitor to the site would do, changing things as we go. The screen above is what site visitors will see when they click on Checkout – a request to set up a new account or log in to an existing one.



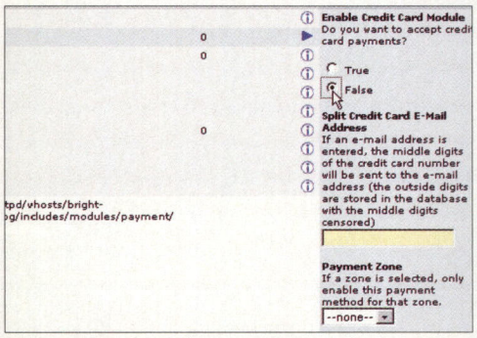
17 THE ACCOUNT CREATION PAGE

In the coming steps, remember you can alter the words that appear on pages like these by making a note of the filename and looking it up in the Includes>Languages>English folder. The default settings for the New Account page are demanding, as they require the visitor to provide unnecessarily personal details like their date of birth and gender.



12 CONFIRMING THE ORDER

After selecting the payment method, you're shown an Order Summary page before confirming everything. A default shipping amount of £5 is added to the order, as we haven't set up own shipping options yet – we'll attend to that later in this tutorial. Click Confirm Order to be transferred to PayPal.



15 NO CARDS OR CASH ON DELIVERY

Click False under Enable Credit Card Module, scroll down and click Update to make the change final. Repeat this with the Cash On Delivery option, which osCommerce enables by default. If you now go back to the site and complete an order, you should see PayPal as the only payment option.

IN DETAIL: ONLINE PAYMENT OPTIONS

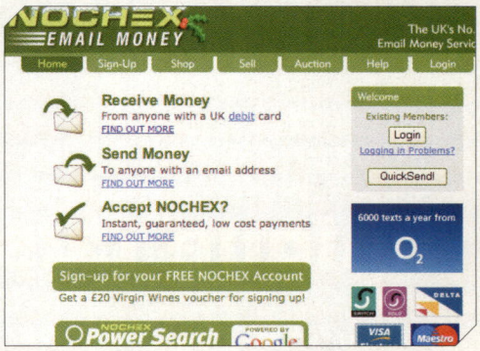
We take a look at the payment services which link to osCommerce and explain their differences

The standard installation of osCommerce comes with seven payment service systems, allowing easy integration between your shopping cart system and external checkout systems, which enables you to avoid the expense and maintenance costs associated with having a secure server of your own.

There are two main types of online payment services available: those that require the setting up of a merchant account and those that don't. A merchant account costs money to set up and maintain, but means that you will be directly billing your customers' credit cards, with your company name appearing on their statement. It is the best route to follow if you are expecting high transaction values and volumes, but otherwise you can probably get by just fine with a non-merchant account system.

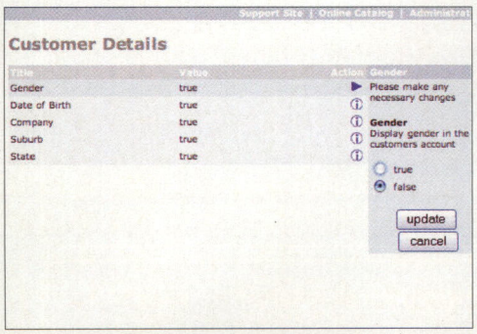
Of the seven systems installed with osCommerce, three are only available to businesses based in North America (Authorize.net, PSiGate and iPayment). SECPay (**www.secpay.com**) is a payment gateway system designed for linking to a merchant account provided by a bank, which may be a complicated way of doing things. WorldPay (**www.worldpay.co.uk**) offers a more streamlined service, and a contribution to link it to osCommerce is available at **www.oscommerce.com**.

The other three services – PayPal (**www.paypal.com**), NOCHEX (**www.nochex.com**) and 2Checkout (**www.2checkout.com**) – don't require merchant accounts, but as a result have stricter transaction value limits. PayPal and 2Checkout only handle credit cards, while NOCHEX only handles debit cards.



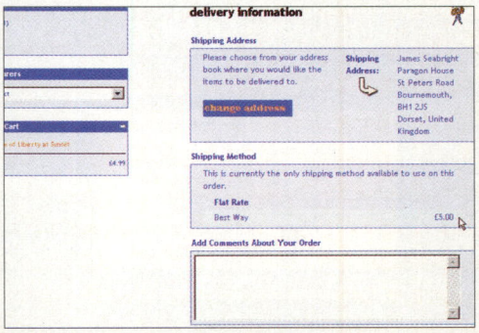
If your transactions are generally under £100 and your customers are happy to pay by debit rather than credit card, NOCHEX is a good option

The 2Checkout system is an alternative if you find PayPal unsuitable, but its charges are more and the UK facilities less comprehensive



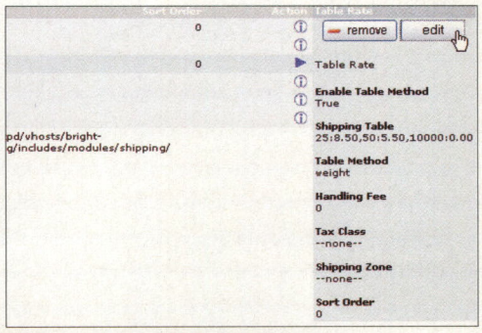
18 TAMING THE NEW CUSTOMER QUIZ

To reduce the curious nature of the New Account form to a more acceptable level, go to your Admin control panel and click on Configuration, followed by Customer Details. To stop the system asking about gender etc, click the offending item, click Edit, change the setting to False and click Update to save.



19 DELIVERY INFORMATION PAGE

If a visitor has set up and logged into an account, clicking the Checkout button will take them to this page, checkout_shipping.php, which lists mailing arrangements for the products they're ordering. osCommerce has one default mailing setting, so we'll look at how to change that.



20 CALCULATING POSTAGE COSTS

In the Admin control panel, go to the Modules section and the Shipping page. It's usually best to disable Flat Rate and enable Table Rate, which lets you determine the postage cost based on weight or price of items in the order. If you want to offer free postage, just set the flat rate cost to Zero.

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- ColdFusion MX
- MS Access, MS SQL2000, MySQL

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- Real/Windows Media Server
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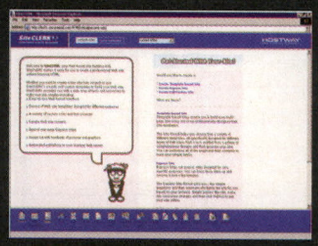

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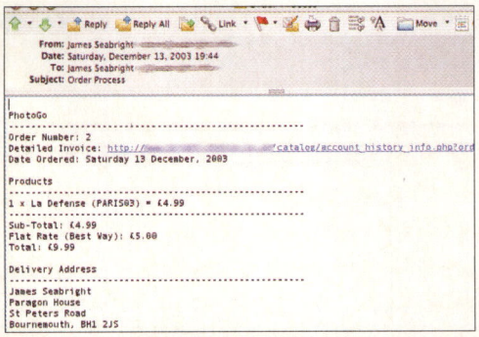
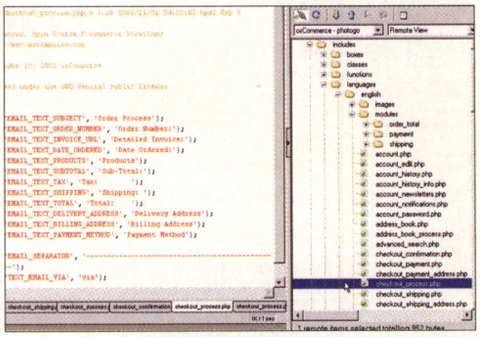


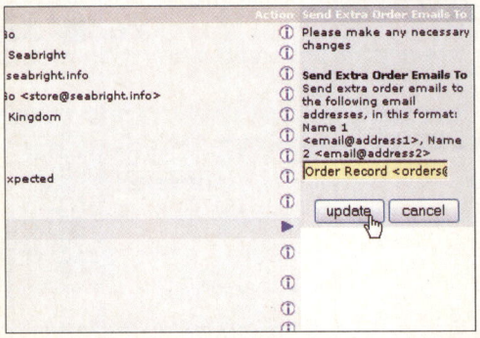
21 EMAIL ORDER CONFIRMATION

Once the user has proceeded through the payment details stage, they will be returned to your osCommerce store and shown a confirmation message about the order they've placed. This will be accompanied by an email like the one above, detailing the order contents.



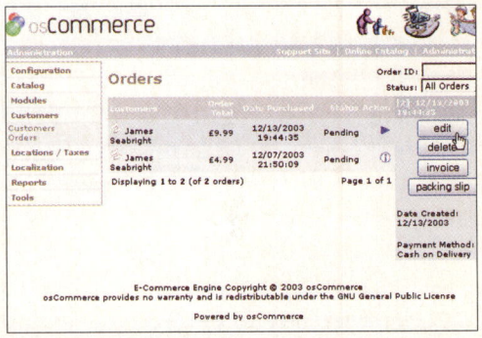
22 EDITING CONFIRMATION EMAIL

To change the wording of the confirmation email, you need to look up the file Includes>Languages>English> checkout_process.php. You might want to add explanations to the titles, for example specifying how long the delivery will take, or to name the site in the subject line.



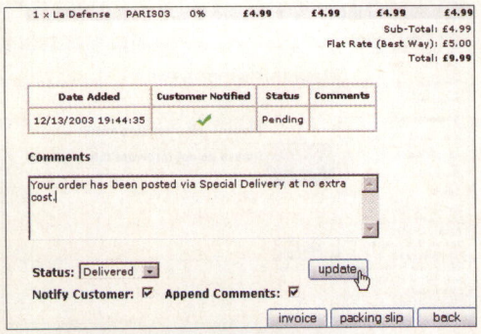
23 SETTING EMAIL OPTIONS

The configuration of who your order confirmation emails come from is done through Admin control's first panel, My Store. In the screenshot we're adding an email address to the Send Extra Order Emails item, which will alert us to new orders. You must still log on to the panel to get full order details.



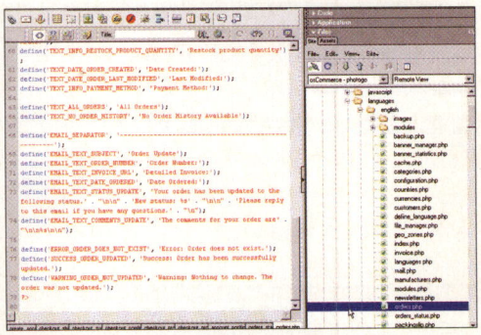
24 DEALING WITH ORDERS

To retrieve full details of an order, you need to click on the Customers section of the Admin control, and the Orders panel. From here you can change the order's status by clicking the Edit button, or print an invoice or packing slip when you're actually preparing the order for postage.



25 CHANGING ORDER STATUS

The above page is a section of what you see upon clicking the Edit button in relation to a particular order. In the example here, we're progressing the order status to Delivered, and have selected the option both to email the customer with this news and to append the comment typed into the box.



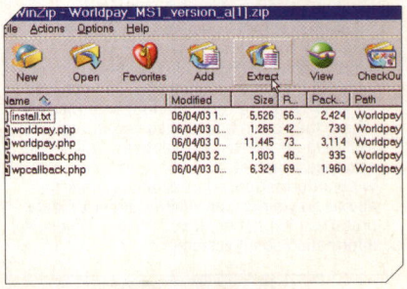
26 ALTERING ORDER STATUS EMAIL

Just to confuse matters, the settings for the text in the Order Status Update email are stored in a completely different location to the settings for the Order Confirmation email. You'll need to look in Admin>Includes>Languages>English> orders.php, and scroll right to the bottom, as shown above.

TECHNIQUE

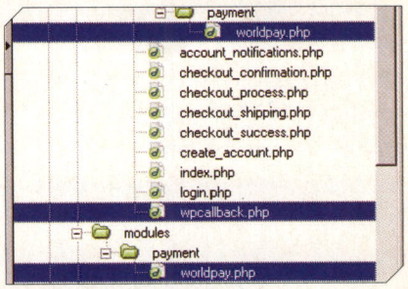
EXTERNAL PAYMENT PROCESSING

One very popular external payment processing service, which combines the merchant account system with the use of an external secure server and processing facility, is WorldPay. A connection to WorldPay isn't provided as a standard part of osCommerce, so here are some guidelines to help you install the contribution at **www.oscommerce.com/community/contributions,882.**



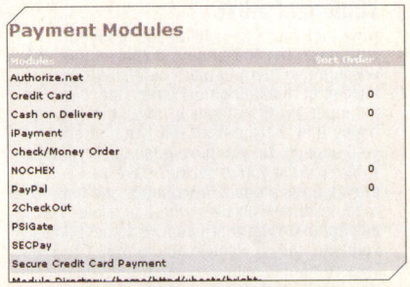
1 EXTRACT THE ARCHIVE

Open the Zip downloaded from Contributions page. Hit Extract/save to desktop. Open and drag the contents (except install.txt file) to local site folder. When prompted to replace files/folders hit Yes To All.



2 UPLOADING THE FILES

In Dreamweaver's Site panel, check you're in Local view; locate (two files) worldpay.php and (two files) wpcallback.php. Select them all and click the blue Up arrow to upload them to your Web server.



3 FINALISING THE INSTALLATION

Open your osCommerce Admin control panel and go to Modules>Payment. Click on Secure Credit Card Payment at the bottom and then Install to activate the Worldpay option.

EXPERT ADVICE

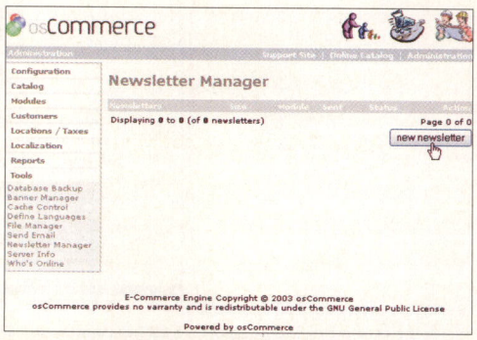
NEWSLETTER NICETIES

If you're sending out emails to customers who sign up to your site's newsletter, you need to be sensitive both to the number of messages sent out and the possibility that people may want to unsubscribe themselves from the service at some point. For this reason, it makes sense to create a standard footer for your newsletter messages which explains why the message is being sent out, and how customers can stop receiving them. One of the features osCommerce lacks is any means of users joining or leaving the newsletter service by sending an email. Instead, you should provide a link to the page 'account.php' on your site, eg **www.yoursite.com/catalog/account.php**, where they can manage their account options including newsletter subscriptions. You should also take a look at **www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk** for advice on your responsibilities under UK data protection legislation, if you're storing personal information about customers.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

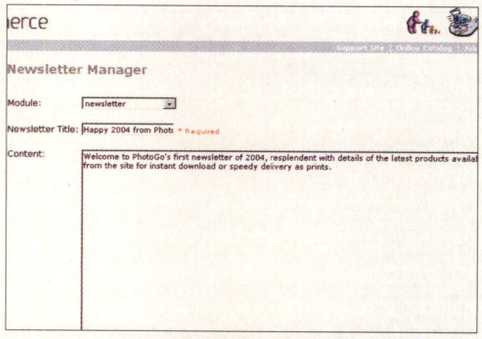
YOUR NEXT MOVE

Now that your site's online and ready for customers, the challenge is finding some, and encouraging them to place orders! We'll be looking at marketing next issue, but of course an important first step is to check that you're happy that the site itself sells your products well enough. Do you have good quality photos to show what you're selling? Have you provided full product descriptions and links to manufacturer Web sites where possible? This is all vital to ensure that when customers find your site, they'll want to buy from it. Check out your competitors on the Net to see what you're up against, both in terms of the online shopping experience they provide and the prices they offer. Next issue we'll also look at how to set up your own secure server if an external payment handling service is not appropriate for your site's requirements.



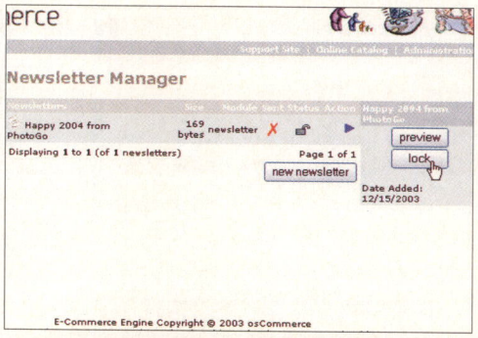
27 KEEPING USERS INFORMED

As we've done everything we need to on the ordering system for now, we'll take a brief look at how to keep visitors up to date by sending out email newsletters, which visitors opt into when they sign up for an account. You can send them via the Newsletter Manager panel, under Tools>Admin control.



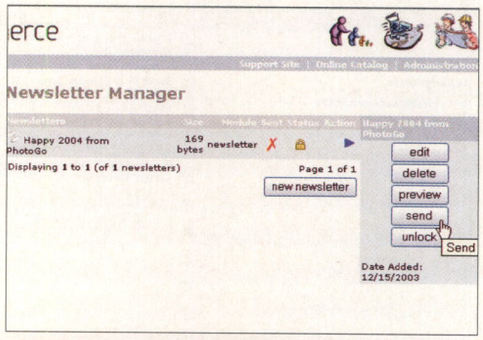
28 STARTING A FRESH MISSIVE

Click the New Newsletter button and you'll see a page like the one above. You can also create product notifications here; just select the relevant item from the Module pop-up menu. Type the subject line for the email into Newsletter Title, and the text of the message in the Content box. Now hit Save.



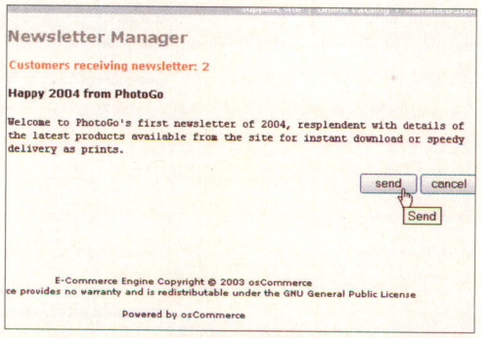
29 PREVIEW AND LOCK THE MESSAGE

As you could well be sending this newsletter out to a large group of people, it is very important that you check it for accuracy by clicking the Preview button and going over it with a fine-tooth comb. Once that's done and any errors ironed out, click the Lock button to freeze the newsletter's contents.



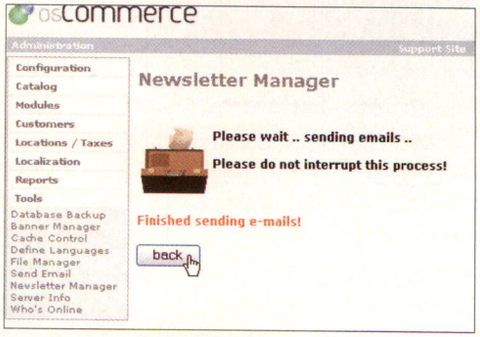
30 SENDING THE MESSAGE

Once a newsletter is locked, the Send button appears. You don't have to send straight away – the Manager will store all past and present newsletters until you choose to delete them. When you're ready to share your words of wisdom with all subscribed customers, click the Send button.



31 LAST CHANCE TO CHECK...

You'll be told how many customers will receive the message, which will be previewed again. We're using a plain text message, but if you have Use MIME HTML selected in Email Options (part of the Configuration section of Admin control) you can code complex newsletters with graphics and text styling.



32 WAITING FOR THE MESSAGE TO SPREAD

If you have a lot of customers, it'll take a while for the system to send out the newsletter to everyone. This is because an individual email is generated for each customer, adding a personal touch but slowing down the sending process. Keep the window open until the Finished Sending message appears.

Speed-up your business

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Tariffs

Office Solo 500	Office Solo 1000	Office Solo 2000
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£26.99 plus VAT and set up	**£39.99 plus VAT and set up**	**£59.99 plus VAT and set up**
Office Express 500	**Office Express 1000**	**Office Express 2000**
• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 512 Kbps download • 256 Kbps upload • Static IP address	• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 1 Mbps download • 256 Kbps upload • Static IP address	• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 2 Mbps download • 256Kbps upload • Static IP address
£ 39.99 plus VAT and set up	**£59.99 plus VAT and set up**	**£84.99 plus VAT and set up**

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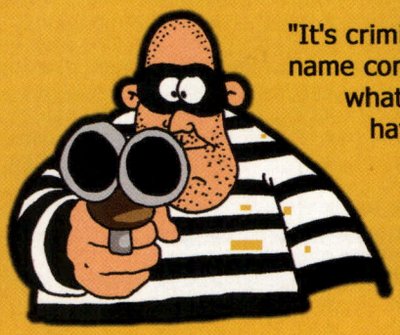
All prices subject to VAT at 17.5 per cent. Connection fee applies at £49.99. Estimated installation time is currently 10 days. Giacom Broadband is a service by Giacom World Networks Limited - www.giacom.com.

ADSL Broadband



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- JTN Customer

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PICK THE PERFECT WEB HOSTING DEAL

FROM ECOMMERCE TO PERSONAL HOSTING, FIND THE HOSTING SERVICE THAT'S PERFECT FOR YOUR NEEDS WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE ROUND-UP OF DEALS

Picking a Web host is a decision often left to the end of the Web creation process. Let's face it, we've all been guilty of concentrating so much on the design of the site that we've ignored the importance of signing up for a good hosting deal. Hosting is of the utmost importance, though – after all, this is where your site will be housed, so it's imperative that you find a service that not only provides you with the services you need, but also with good reliability.

That's why we've scoured the Net to find a selection of relevant deals that should help you ascertain the service that's perfect for you. The aim in compiling this guide is to allow you to see the different types of packages available and help you glean some idea of the costs you're likely to face. While we haven't included every single deal offered by the firms included, we have listed the products that we think are most relevant to our readers.

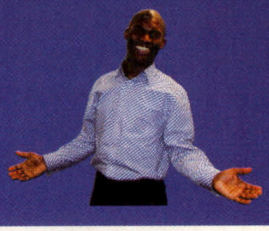
Our listings contain the categories that we think will be most relevant to you. With this in mind, we hope that we can help you pick the hosting deal that will suit you best – don't just jump in and sign up on the basis of the figures you see on these pages, though. We recommend using the information below to pick out a handful of firms that cater for your needs. The next step is to contact each directly to discuss your requirements further.

HEEPING UP TO DATE

While we try and ensure that all the information in our listings is up to date, the occasional error does creep through. If you would like to update your current details, drop an email to **webdesigner@paragon.co.uk** with the information you would like changed.

NAME AND URL	PACKAGE	PHONE NUMBER	COST PER YEAR	WEB SPACE	MONTHLY BANDWIDTH	POP3 ACCOUNTS	FRONTPAGE EXTENSIONS	DATABASE SUPPORT	SHOPPING CART	VIRUS FILTER	FIREWALL	PHONE SUPPORT	EMAIL SUPPORT	WEB CONTROL PANEL	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Starters	08708 503 305	£26.06	.25MB		20	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Home (Linux)	08708 503 305	£70.36	500MB	3Gb	100	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Home (MS)	08708 503 305	£84.46	500MB	3Gb	100	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Business (Linux)	08708 503 305	£126.76	1GB	10Gb	300	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Business (MS)	08708 503 305	£140.86	1GB	10Gb	300	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Professional (Linux)	08708 503 305	£239.56	2GB	40Gb	1000	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Professional (MS)	08708 503 305	£281.86	2GB	40Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123 reg www.123-reg.co.uk	Regular	0900 11 22 123	45.87	250Mb	10	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123 reg www.123-reg.co.uk	Xtra	0900 11 22 123	269.87	500Mb	25	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123-reg (www.123-reg.co.uk)	123-reg xtra	0900 2211123	£59.88	500Mb	2Gb	25	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	Everyday	0845 166 7456	£100	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	PHP	0845 166 7456	£150	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	JAVA Tomcat	0845 166 7456	£175	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	Coldfusion	0845 166 7456	£250	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49pence (www.49pence.com)	Standard	0870 141 7149	24.99	50mb	500mb	1	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49pence (www.49pence.com)	Advanced	0870 141 7149	£49.99	200mb	1000mb	10	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49pence (www.49pence.com)	Enterprise	0870 141 7149	£74.99	500	2500	20	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49pence (www.49pence.com)	Enterprise Pro	0870 141 7149	£124.99	1Gb	5Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49pence (www.49pence.com)	Ultra	0870 141 7149	£249.99	2.5Gb	1.5Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Bronze Package	0845 166 8386	£40.00	10Mb	500Mb	2	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Gold Package	0845 166 8386	£79.99	50Mb	2Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Titanium Package	0845 166 8386	£149.99	500Mb	5Gb	500	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Reseller Package	0845 166 8386	£299.99	1Gb	10Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Starter	0870 8726560	99	50	1.5Gb	10	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Professional	0870 8726560	199	100	2.5Gb	25	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Corporate	0870 8726560	399	500	5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BeamHost (www.beamhost.co.uk)	Economy	0871 277 9827	£120	1Gb	50Gb	300	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Cheapnet (www.cheapnet.co.uk)	ISP For Small Businesses	0870 516 8160	£96	Unlimited	10Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Christian Technology Ltd (www.christiantechnology.co.uk)	Base Package	0870 742 0530	£94	25Mb	1Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Clara.net (www.clara.net)	Clarahost Lite	0845 355 1000	29.99	10	1Gb	10	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clara.net (www.clara.net)	Clarahost Advanced	0845 355 1000	699	500	30Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CWCS Managed Hosting (www.cwcs.co.uk)	CWCS Entry Package	0870 703 1000	£120	100Mb	1.5Gb	5	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DataGate (www.datagate.co.uk)	Exchange Hosting	08000 19 98 19	From £204	100Mb	Unlimited	0	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DataGate (www.datagate.co.uk)	Unix Shared Business Hosting	08000 19 98 19	£249	200Mb	6Gb	100	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level1	0800 652 2110	185	50	1gb	10	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level2	0800 652 2110	259	100	2gb	25	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level3	0800 652 2110	330	200	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level4	0800 652 2110	369	300	4Gb	80	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level5	0800 652 2110	409	400	5Gb	120	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level6	0800 652 2110	549	600	6Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

- Domain Names
- Virtual Web Hosting
- Dedicated Solutions
- Custom Enterprise Servers
- Advanced Control Panel
- Windows or Linux platforms
- 30 Day Money Back Guarantee
- Award winning Support



NAME AND URL	PACKAGE	PHONE NUMBER	COST PER YEAR	WEB SPACE	MONTHLY BANDWIDTH	POP3 ACCOUNTS	FRONTPAGE EXTENSIONS	DATABASE SUPPORT	SHOPPING CART	VIRUS FILTER	FIREWALL	PHONE SUPPORT	EMAIL SUPPORT	WEB CONTROL PANEL	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
Dedicated Servers (www.dedicated-servers.co.uk)	Linux entry	0870 333 0365	99/month	40gb	30Gb	variable	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated Servers (www.dedicated-servers.co.uk)	Windows entry	0870 333 0365	199/month	40gb	30Gb	variable	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Reseller Unix	0870 7414151	£470	Unlimited	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Reseller Windows	0870 7414151	£587.50	Unlimited	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Enterprise Plan	0870 7414151	£105.75	100Mb	2Gb	20	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Commerce Plan	0870 7414151	£211.50	250Mb	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Designer Plan	0870 7414151	£141	100Mb	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Developer Plan	0870 741415	£305.50	250Mb	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Windows Shared	n/a	44.99	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Starter	n/a	19.99	50	1Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Standard	n/a	44.99	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Premier	n/a	79.99	200	3Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Basic Plan	070 2097 1262	£131.40	50Mb	1.5Gb	5	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Standard Plan	070 2097 1262	£191.40	100Mb	3Gb	40	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Advanced Plan	070 2097 1262	£251.40	150Mb	5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Professional Plan	070 2097 1262	£311.40	300Mb	6Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
eHosting (www.ehosting.co.uk)	Home & Business 200 Account	0161 236 2241	£49.99	200Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Kick Start Linux	0871 717 0390	49	50	3Gb	20	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Kick Start Windows	0871 717 0390	75	50	3Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Standard Linux	0871 717 0390	99	100	3Gb	100	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Windows	0871 717 0390	125	100	3Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Enterprise Linux	0871 717 0390	199	250	5Gb	250	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Enterprise Windows	0871 717 0390	225	250	5Gb	250	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Pro Linux	0871 717 0390	399	500	10Gb	500	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Business	0870 888 3600	149.99	2Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Business Pro	0870 888 3600	249.99	5Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Net Pro	0870 888 3600	299.99	3Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Net Standard	0870 888 3600	199.99	2Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Starter	0870 888 3600	19.99	100	n/a	15	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Home	0870 888 3600	49.99	500	n/a	100	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Home Pro	0870 888 3600	69.99	1Gb	n/a	300	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Giacom (www.giacom.net)	Business Pro	0800 542 7500	199	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hostextra (www.hostextra.co.uk)	Pro-Host	08702 501 500	99.45	100	10Gb	200		✓				✓	✓	✓	
Global Gold (www.globalgold.co.uk)	Unix launcher	0870 004 4444	78	50	5gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global Gold (www.globalgold.co.uk)	NT launcher		180	50	5gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Haisoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft Perso	0870 080 4247	£14.90	100Mb	1Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HaiSoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft Pro	0870 080 4247	£49.90	500Mb	10Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HaiSoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft eCommerce	0870 080 4247	£99.90	750Mb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HostSupreme (www.hostsupreme.co.uk)	Windows 2000 Unlimited Plan	0208 777 8881	£99.50	Unlimited	Unmetered	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HostSupreme (www.hostsupreme.co.uk)		0208 777 8881	£99.50	1Gb	5Gb	1000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Silver	0808 180 1880	£89.95	100Mb	1Gb	5	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Gold	0808 180 1880	£134.55	200Mb	4Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Gold Plus	0808 180 1880	£179.55	200Mb	6Gb	30	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Platinum	0808 180 1880	£449.55	500Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Platinum Plus	0808 180 1880	£809.95	500Mb	15Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Email Plus	0808 180 1880	£49.95	50Mb	n/a	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Lite	08712 773494	14.99	25	1Gb	5	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Starter	08712 773494	23.49	50	1Gb	20	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Standard	08712 773494	52.49	100	1Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Professional	08712 773494	68.99	250	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Business	08712 773494	119.99	500	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Corporate	08712 773494	199.99	1000	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interdirect Limited (www.interdirect.co.uk)	Business Starter	0845 121 5566	150	25Mb	5Gb	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	n/a	n/a
Interdirect Limited (www.interdirect.co.uk)	Business Intermediate	0845 121 5566	350	100Mb	10Gb	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	n/a	n/a
Interdirect Limited (www.interdirect.co.uk)	Business Advanced	0845 121 5566	450	250Mb	20Gb	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	n/a	n/a
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Basic 50	0870 160 5555	70	50	1Gb	5	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Frontpage 50	0870 160 5555	100	50	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Standard 200	0870 160 5555	160	200	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Superior 500	0870 160 5555	220	500	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 50	0870 160 5555	100	50	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 200	0870 160 5555	190	200	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 500	0870 160 5555	260	500	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inweb (www.inweb.co.uk)	Example1	0800 612222	200	50	2.5Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Entry	0115 917 0000	99.95	600Mb	1	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Pro	0115 917 0000	199.95	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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NAME AND URL	PACKAGE	PHONE NUMBER	COST PER YEAR	WEB SPACE	MONTHLY BANDWIDTH	POP3 ACCOUNTS	FRONTPAGE EXTENSIONS	DATABASE SUPPORT	SHOPPING CART	VIRUS FILTER	FIREWALL	PHONE SUPPORT	EMAIL SUPPORT	WEB CONTROL PANEL	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business	0115 917 0000	199	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business e-commerce	0115 917 0000	499	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Reseller	0115 917 0000	500	Unlimited	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Home User Package	0870 9059 444	£35.25	50Mb	500Mb	5	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Advanced User Package	0870 9059 444	£58.75	100Mb	750Mb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Small Business Package	0870 9059 444	£82.25	175Mb	1Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Large Business Package	0870 9059 444	£105.75	300Mb	1.2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Premium Business Package	0870 9059 444	£176.25	500Mb	1.5Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NetBenefit (www.netbenefit.com)	Business Package	0870 264 2298	£199	100Mb	2Gb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Home package	0800 2987 214	£60	100Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Commerce	0800 2987 214	£180	200Mb	4Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Reseller	0800 2987 214	£450	2Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 2000	0800 2987 214	£2000	80Gb	12Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 2400	0800 2987 214	£3000	160Gb	24Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 3000	0800 2987 214	£4000	2x73Gb SCSI	30Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 1800	0800 2987 214	£780	40Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netscalibur (www.netscalibur.com)	Netscalibur Web Unix	0800 072 0000	324	100	5Gb	1	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netscalibur (www.netscalibur.com)	Netscalibur Web Windows	0800 072 0000	324	100	5Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Standard Hosting	01329 226722	50	0	0	1	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Bronze Unix	01329 226722	100	250	250Mb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Gold Unix	01329 226722	149	1Gb	1Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Gold Windows	01329 226722	149	1Gb	1Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Pay As You Host (www.pay-as-you-host.com)	Standard	0870 284 0287	£47.88	50Mb	512Mb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Z account	0800 316 1006	£293.75	120Mb	10Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Dolphin	0800 316 1006	£2172.58	2x20Gb	40-60Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Fully managed servers	0800 316 1006	*£5287.50	2x70Gb SCSI	80-250Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Basic	01684 893020	47.88	10Mb	1Gb	1	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Soho	01684 893020	71.88	250Mb	3Gb	10	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Enterprise	01684 893020	107.88	500Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Corporate	01684 893020	203.88	1Gb	20Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Designer	01684 893020	239.88	1Gb	20Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Reseller	01684 893020	479.88	unlimited	30Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Standard 1	0800 321 7788	49	10Mb	2Gb	1	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Standard 2	0800 321 7788	69	20Mb	2Gb	1	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Premium 1	0800 321 7788	99	25Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Premium 2	0800 321 7788	149	50Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SO Hosts (www.sohosts.com)	Standard	0845 644 1080	£29.99	500Mb	Unlimited	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift Internet (www.swiftinter.net)	S15 Linux	0845 60 60 210	£44	75Mb	1Gb	1	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift Internet (www.swiftinter.net)	S25 Linux	0845 60 60 210	£70	125Mb	2Gb	5	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift Internet (www.swiftinter.net)	S50 Linux or Windows	0845 60 60 210	£94	250Mb	3Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Swift Internet (www.swiftinter.net)	S125 Linux or Windows	0845 60 60 210	£170	750Mb	7Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Parking	08707 65 63 64	£52.88	25Mb	500Mb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Forwarding	08707 65 63 64	From £15	n/a	500Mb	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Hosting	08707 65 63 64	From £7.50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win50	0845 125 9500	£58.75	50Mb	500Mb	5	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win100	0845 125 9500	£117.50	100Mb	1Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win200	0845 125 9500	£235	200Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ValueWebHosts (www.valuewebhosts.com)	Plan 1	n/a	£8.99	Unlimited	125Mb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	Entry	0870 333 0250	£79.50	600Mb	7Gb	300	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	Home	0870 333 025	0£99.95	1.5Gb	10Gb	500	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	Soho	0870 333 0250	£149.99	3Gb	15Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	Professional	0870 333 0250	£199.95	5Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	eCommerce	0870 333 0250	£499	5Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Standard	0870 050 0080	39.95	50Mb	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Standard Plus	0870 050 0080	99.95	50Mb	2Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Business	0870 050 0080	79.95	100Mb	3Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Business Plus	0870 050 0080	159.95	150Mb	4Gb	30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Professional	0870 050 0080	179.95	250Mb	7Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Professional Plus	0870 050 0080	299	500Mb	10Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Standard Multiweb	0870 050 0080	64.95	75Mb	1.5Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Standard Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	149.95	100Mb	2.5Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Business Multiweb	0870 050 0080	149.95	200Mb	4Gb	25	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Business Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	299	250Mb	5Gb	40	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Professional Multiweb	0870 050 0080	249	500Mb	7.5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Professional Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	499	500Mb	10Gb	150	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

TECH SUPPORT

THE EXPERTS

WHO'S ON CALL?

MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM

Mark lectures on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, where he teaches digital imaging, interface design and 3D applications. Mark is our resident Flash expert, so send your vector-based animation anger to him and he'll find a cure. This issue, Mark takes a good look at event handlers, as well as showing you an easy way to duplicate graphics onscreen.

CHRIS SCHMIDT

Chris is a freelance writer with specialist areas in topics as diverse as Dreamweaver and digital music creation. He is also a joint partner in the track5 Web design agency (**www.track5.co.uk**). All of this means that he's perfect to take charge of your Dreamweaver problems. Chris is also the man to cure your sites with a makeover – see his Site SOS on page 120.

GEORGE CAIANS

George is a freelance illustrator who specialises in Photoshop, After Effects and 3D modelling. We've procured George's formidable talents as our regular Photoshop expert, so any time you have a problem with your pixels, call upon George. This issue has a decidedly spooky flavour, as he shows you how to create a 'haunted home page' and write text on a virtual gravestone.

RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she was the perfect choice to be our Web development expert, so any time you have a coding glitch, drop Rachel a line and she'll sort you out.

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FLASH

HAVING PROBLEMS WITH VECTOR-BASED ANIMATION? ALLOW MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM TO CURE YOUR HEADACHES WITH A SMILE

CUSTOM MOUSE

Q I would like to be able to change the mouse pointer so that I can insert my own custom mouse on my Web site. Is there an easy way to do this in Flash?

David Parr

A This is a great way to customise your Web site, David, and yes it is fairly straightforward to do. First create a movie clip in the library and draw your new custom mouse pointer. Once you've done this, return to the main stage, drag your pointer from the library onto the stage and press F9 to open the ActionScript editor. Enter the following code into it:

```
onClipEvent (enterFrame) {
        Mouse.hide();
        x = _root._xmouse;
        y = _root._ymouse;
        this._x = x;
        this._y = y;
        updateAfterEvent();
}
```

This code is set to work the whole time that the graphic has the playhead over it, hence the enterFrame event handler. Then the code hides the mouse from view and stores the X position of the mouse, being the horizontal position on the screen, in a variable called 'X'. It does the same with the Y co-ordinate, which is the vertical position. After that your custom mouse is positioned at the X and Y location of the mouse – then just to keep the whole thing ticking over, the immediate changes are sent back to the stage, so that using updateAfterEvent sends the changes. It's good to use updateAfterEvent, because if you're using a low frame rate such as 12 frames per second it keeps the mouse movement fluid, as with the regular mouse.

If you ever want to bring back the regular mouse, make sure the above code is not under the playhead and use the following code on a frame:

```
Mouse.show();
```

This will return the mouse for regular use. Of course if you never want to return the mouse, don't use this code, as the mouse will return to normal when taken outside the Flash movie or when a different Web site is loaded.

EVENT HANDLER

Q I have seen you mention in your tutorials and in the Tech Support something called an 'event handler'. I was just wondering if you could tell me what this is, as I'm quite new to programming and would like some help with this term.

Jessica Scott

A It's always a pleasure to help someone get to know the basics so that they can start getting creative with code. An event handler does just what it says on the tin – if this was a Ronseal ad. It handles events. Why do they need handling, you might ask. Well, computers need to know when to execute any given task, so the event handler will tell Flash exactly when the code inside the event handler should be executed.

This isn't as complicated as it may sound. For example, if you have a button, you may wish to have code as follows:

```
on(press){
        //do something
}
```

The event handler will only be called upon when the button is pressed. The handler always has an open curly brace at the end of the line and a closing curly brace. Every piece of code inside the curly braces is executed only when the event handler is true. The code above is not real code, as you might guess – the double slashes turn the line into a comment, which is ignored by Flash. Other event handlers are for movie clips such as onClipEvent(enterFrame), (load), (mouseMove), etc, which are read at the relevant times that the events in the brackets are true.

The only time you do not need to use event handlers is when you are applying code to a frame action. Flash will automatically read this as the playhead moves over the frame.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Q This probably seems like an easy question, but nevertheless it has been bothering me for some time. I am used to working with Illustrator and turning the stroke off by turning the width to 0 or by clicking on the None icon for the stroke colour. When I try entering a stroke value of 0 in Flash, however, a pop-up window tells me that I have to enter a number of 0.1 or higher. When I try to select the graphic and change the stroke colour to 'None' there is no icon to do this. Why does it look different?

Jenny Bishops

A It's perfectly normal to be confused when changing from working in one application to another. While everything is similar, there are enough differences to cause some confusion, but you will be glad to know that these are very easy to get around.

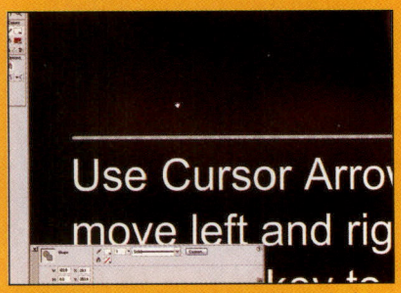
If you select your graphic in Flash the stroke is by default not selected – which is the first difference.

EXPERT ADVICE

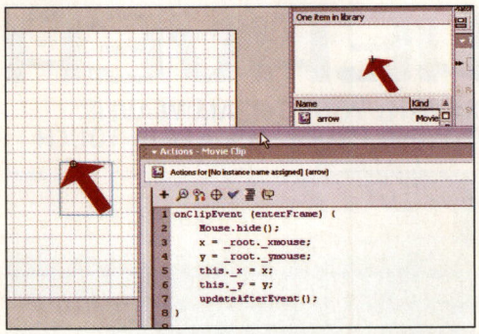
A BETTER VIEW

ZOOMING IN ON YOUR DESIGNS

Don't be put off zooming in on your designs so you can see more clearly what's going on. The fact that Flash artwork is made of vectors means you can zoom in as close as you like without losing any of the image quality which you've come to expect from it. Zooming in will help you align and keep close control over your layouts. A way to pan around your document is to use the Hand tool from the toolbar. This will let you move around, but if you have the Arrow tool selected you can just hold down the spacebar, and this saves changing tools for a faster workflow.

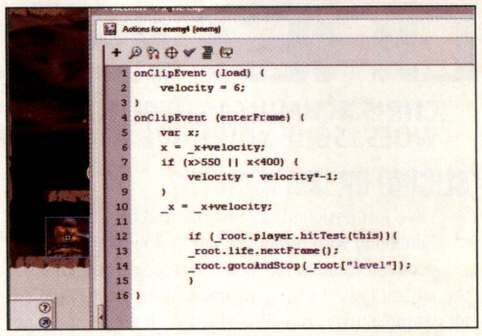


Zooming in on complicated artwork is an absolute must in Flash, and it's very easy to do as well

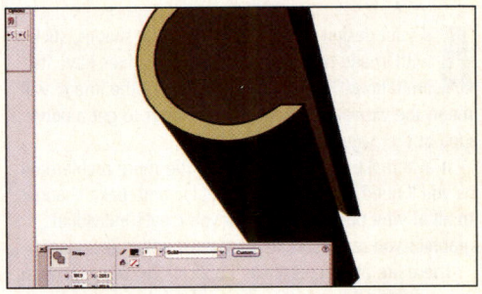


Want your own mouse pointer? Easy-peasy – just get Flash to do all the work for you by using a little bit of ActionScript genius

Having said that, you don't need to select the whole graphic anyway, just the edge. You can click once on the edge to select it and that will select just one edge of the graphic. Double-clicking on the edge will select the entire edge of the graphic, which should look almost furry because it is selected. There is no need to reduce the width to zero or indeed to change the colour of the stroke. Instead just hit the Delete button and your edge will disappear. If at a later date you wish to add a stroke again, just click on the Ink Bottle tool from the toolbar and this will add it in, then click on the edge of the graphic to apply a stroke in the thickness and colour of your choice.



Event handlers are very important within Flash, and tell the program what action to perform when something happens



Get to know your stroke panel and you can make subtle differences to your graphics in next to no time at all

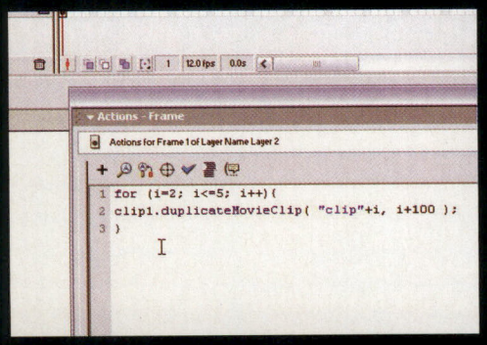
TECHNIQUE

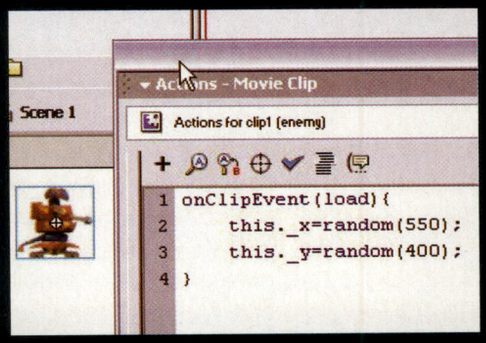
MAKING DUPLICATES

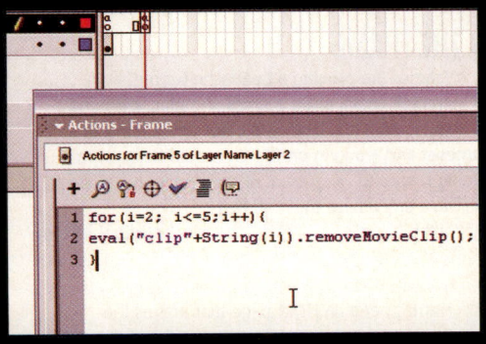
Q Is there an easy way to duplicate graphics on the screen? For example, I may wish to have a number of images located at random locations around the stage, but I don't want to drag off instances from the library. I'd like Flash to do that for me.

Franko Woods

A This can be done in Flash using the duplicateMovieClip command, which can be set to make copies by placing it inside a for loop. This is a programming loop which continues to do an operation until a certain event is true – perfect for duplicating movie clips, as the for loop can be switched off when a certain number is reached. Duplicating movie clips can be a pain though, as the copies are created on higher levels than other content on the stage, so you have to duplicate content you want visible above these clips. Then to get rid of them you have to use code. Worry not – all the necessary code is included below.







1 CREATE A MOVIE CLIP

Create a movie clip with the content that you wish to duplicate inside it. When you've done this, return to the main scene1, drag your movie clip onto the stage and give it the instance name of 'clip1'. Hit Return then add the code shown above to a frame.

2 RANDOMISE THE OBJECT

If you test the movie right now, you will have five duplications. However, they are all on top of each other so are not very visible. If you want to place them in a random position, select the movie clip on the stage and press F9 to add the code shown above.

3 REMOVING THE DUPLICATIONS

Testing the movie now should show you five copies dotted around the stage. To remove the code, place the code as shown above on the frame or under an event handler for when you want it to be removed, and that should help out your randomised movie clips.

DREAMWEAVER

CHRIS SCHMIDT IS HERE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR DREAMWEAVER WOES, SO IF YOU HAVE ANY WEB-WEAVING PROBLEMS, GET IN TOUCH

SLICING OR IMAGE MAPS?

Q I've just designed my first site and have been dabbling with Dreamweaver to figure out how to convert it into a functional Web page. What are the advantages of slicing my images, for the navigation for example, over using image maps? It would seem as though mapping links is a much easier process.

Brenda Adams

A If your design makes use of irregular shapes, stick with image mapping. However, this does have its limitations. The increased file size of the image will mean the viewer is forced to wait longer to get a good idea of the page structure.

It also makes future changes a little more problematic, as you'll need to recreate the graphic and make changes to all of your pages, whereas if you create individual graphics you can insert new links wherever necessary.

There are also accessibility implications, but as long as you provide Alt tag content for each of the mapped regions you should be okay.

Image maps allow complex shapes to take on link properties, but make updating a site's navigation a design issue

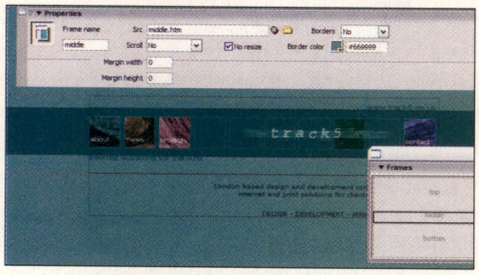
IN THE FRAME

Q Frames are proving a headache for me. I've created a site using a simple header, left-hand navigation and body area, but on opening the frameset and working on the individual frames I'm finding it hard to keep track of the multiple files. Do you have any advice that will help?

Michael Alkalay

A Frames need an HTML page that acts as the frameset which determines the embedded pages in context of each other. Other than this, the frameset contains little further information apart from meta data. It can become confusing to keep track of your files, a common element overlooked is the Frames panel, as this isn't active within the default Dreamweaver interface.

Access this via the Window menu and you'll be able to select the individual frame and gain access to its properties via the Properties Inspector to control more global options. Clicking on the boundaries between frames will also help, as will making use of the nested tags at the foot of the window.



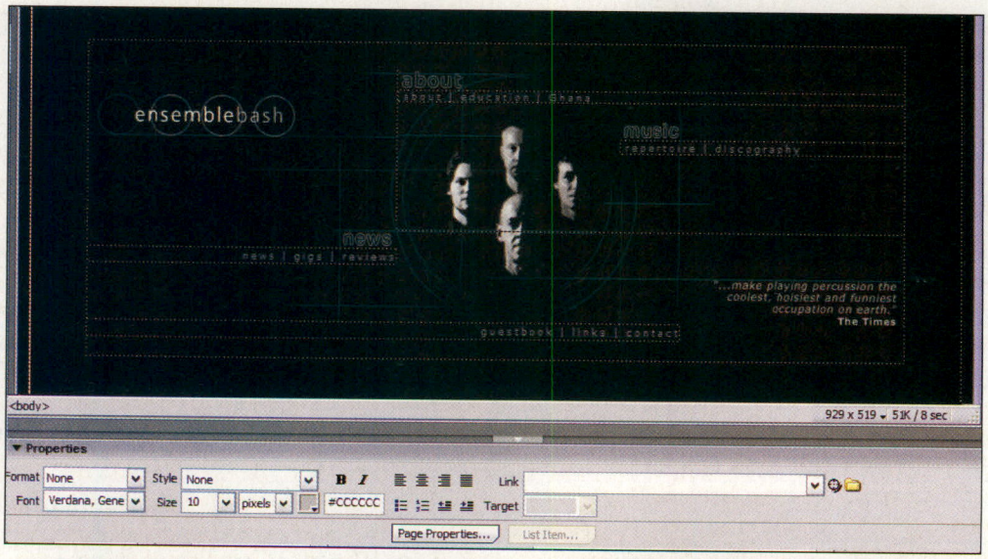
Using the Frame panel means you have easier access to the controlling frameset, which is tricky to select due to the embedded nature of frames

LAYOUT TABLE

Q I'm trying to position a layout table within the Browser window so it automatically centres regardless of the screen resolution or the window dimensions. The horizontal alignment isn't a problem, although the vertical positioning is proving a little more of a challenge. How can I get round this?

Leonard Lang

A Although you should use CSS positioning to achieve the effect, there is a much simpler method that's just as reliable. The horizontal alignment is easy to apply by selecting the layout table and making use of the Align="center" attribute, but there's no corresponding property for the vertical alignment of a table (although there is for a table cell). With this in mind, create a single cell table and set the dimensions to fill the page at 100% wide and 100% tall, and place your main layout table inside this. You can now configure the alignment of the single cell to position the page in the centre both vertically and horizontally inside this.



The main design is contained within its own table, which in turn is centred to the page through the properties of the surrounding cell

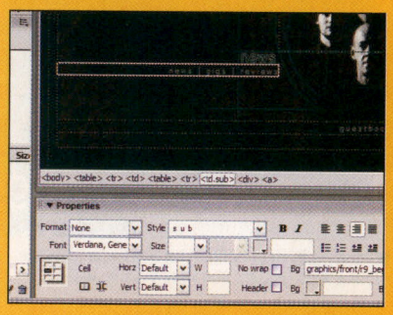
EXPERT ADVICE

BASE TAGS

NESTED TAGS

HTML is a hierarchical mark-up language, which means that tags become nested among each other and deeper content is often embedded within various tags. This can make selecting surrounding tags such as table cells problematic unless you're aware of the situation, but there are ways around this.

One of the most reliable methods over various versions of Dreamweaver is to look towards the foot of the page, where you'll find a list of the base tags that contain the currently selected object. If you select a tag instance at any level of the hierarchy, you'll find the Design and Code views will update to reflect your selection, and relevant options will become available through the Properties Inspector.



The seemingly random tags available at the foot of the currently active document provide a hierarchy of structural HTML tags that lead to the current cursor point

PHOTOSHOP

GET YOUR PHOTOSHOP SKILLS UP TO SCRATCH, THANKS TO GEORGE CAIRNS' EXCELLENT ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

REALISTIC ENGRAVED TEXT

Q I'm doing a site on graveyards and I'd love the splash page to have a welcome message chiselled into a gravestone. How do I create this?

Andy Pool

A Photoshop CS has all the tools you need to create realistic chiselled gravestone text. Find a decent gravestone shot. You might have to clone out existing text so you don't offend relations of the person buried there! Create a new layer in Photoshop and type in your welcome message using the Text tool (T) in a suitable font. Carving in stone is a tricky job, so choose a san serif font such as Helvetica. Set the Font colour to black. Once you've typed the text, click on the tick at the top of the screen. Move the text into position using the Move tool (M). To get the text to align with the angle of the stone go to Edit>Transform. You'll need to use the Rotate and Skew options to position the text appropriately. When it's in place go to the Layer Style shortcut at the bottom of the Layers palette and choose Bevel and Emboss. This will open the Layer Style window. Set the Style to Inner Bevel and the Technique to Chisel Hard. Set the direction of the bevel to Down. In the Shading section of the Layer Style window set the light direction to match the light in the source image. This will make the engraving look correctly lit, causing it to blend believably with the rest of the image.

All you need to do now is give the text the same texture as the stone. To do this use a clipping mask. Duplicate the gravestone picture and place it above the text layer. Select the duplicated layer and go to Layer> Create Clipping Mask. The underlying text is filled with the gravestone texture from the top layer, creating a convincing chiselled text effect. You can now go to the text's Layer Style window and fine-tune the lighting, chisel depth and so on.

ISOLATING COLOURS

Q I want to create links to other parts of my site by having the linkable sections of an image map in colour, and the rest of the image in black and white. Is there a quick way of creating this effect?

Tracey Young

The Magic Wand tool worked its magic to help us create this striking effect of colour against a black and white background

A Before we removed the green from the fields in our image, we selected the girl's green trousers using the Magic Wand tool (W) on a Tolerance setting of 22 (hold down Shift to add more areas to the selection). We then went to Select>Inverse, to edit everything outside the selection. Once you've protected the area you want to keep, go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation in the main menu bar. Select the Green channel (Command & 3) and reduce the Saturation to 0 to make the green parts look black and white. We reduced the Yellow channel's Saturation value to 0 too. To get rid of the blue sky but keep the blue top worn by the girl we selected the sky with the Magic Wand tool. We could then remove the blue from this isolated selection.

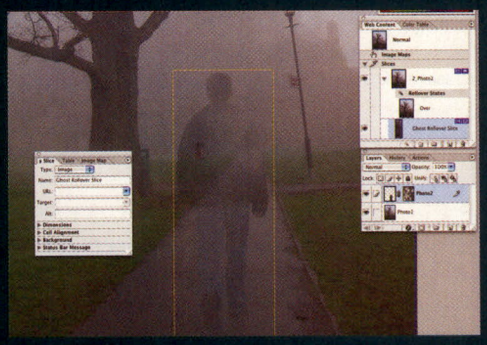
TECHNIQUE

CREATE A HAUNTED HOME PAGE

Q I want to create a rollover graphic where a ghostly figure appears on my home page. Any tips?

Martin Hannington

A To make a semi-transparent ghostly figure we're going to adapt a standard movie special effects technique – the Dissolve. Take a shot of your background on a locked-off tripod. Then take an identical shot with your would-be ghost in position. Follow these Photoshop steps for a ghostly rollover GIF.



1 MIX LAYERS

Place both source images on separate layers. Place the image with the person in it on top of the empty background version. Move the Fill slider in the Layers palette down to around 36%. The person in the shot will appear to partially fade, as you see through to the layer below.

2 ADD LAYER MASK

Select the layer with the 'ghost' on it and click the Add a Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers palette. Click on the mask adjacent to the layer thumbnail and go to Filter> Render>Clouds. The greyscale cloud pokes spooky misty holes of different intensities through the figure.

3 SLICE AND DICE

Use the Slice tool to select the ghost. In the Slice Options window label the slice 'Ghost Rollover Slice'. Jump to Image Ready. You can now use the Web Content palette to create a rollover that reveals the ghost when the mouse moves over the relevant part of the image

DEVELOPER

RACHEL ANDREW SHOWS YOU HOW TO TAME EVEN THE MIGHTIEST OF CODING TECHNOLOGIES AND CREATE SITES THE WAY YOU WANT

ADDING A DATABASE

Q I'm interested in adding a database to my site, but I don't know where to start. There seem to be so many choices of database and then languages such as PHP, ASP and Perl. Do I have to learn all of these languages?

Eric Hargrove

A If you are just starting out and don't have any programming experience, it doesn't really matter too much which language you begin with. You'll need to be able to test your work, and that means installing a server on your own computer. If you are running Windows you can install IIS from your Windows CD and start with ASP with an Access database. Both Windows and Mac OSX users can install Apache, PHP and the MySQL database, and begin to learn PHP and MySQL.

Learning the concepts of database-driven sites is the tricky bit. If you learn one language and platform well, you won't have much trouble swapping to another later on.

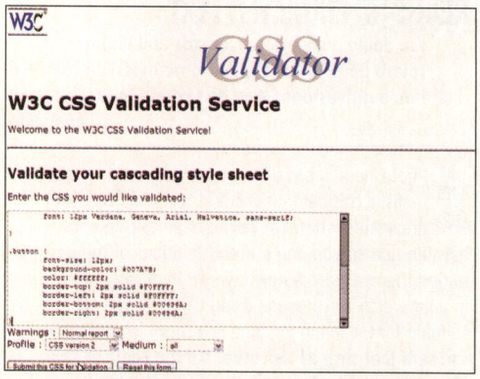
WEB STANDARDS

Q I've been reading a lot about 'Web standards' recently, and about how important it is to make sure your HTML validates. Surely the important thing is making sure your site looks cool in the main browsers that people are using, rather than trying to comply with some standard?

Julie Parker

A Validating your code is important because not only do developers follow the standards set by the W3C, but browser manufacturers do so as well. If you just rely on your site looking good in the browsers, and you have used invalid or proprietary markup, you might find that when a new version of a browser comes out, your layout looks really strange in it because it has 'fixed' the reason why your hack worked in the first place.

Also, for most of us it isn't possible to test in every kind of browser there is. People are accessing the Web with a range of devices, including speaking browsers (for the visually impaired), Web phones, PDAs and various browsers other than IE. Your best chance of ensuring your site works reasonably on all these devices is to comply with the same standards that the developers used to create them.



It's vital to validate your markup to avoid problems later on

Validating your mark-up is easy. HTML and XHTML can be tested at **validator.w3.org**. CSS can be validated by going to **jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/**

TECHNIQUE

GIVE YOUR SITE A BIT OF STYLE

Q On some sites I've seen some really lovely form text fields that fit in with the style of the site perfectly. I'd love to know how to create these as they look much nicer than the standard grey boxes.

Joanne Ellison

A The forms you have seen have been styled with CSS. CSS gives you far more choice in how page elements display, and you can create attractive form elements quite easily. If you are going to be creating many forms on a site, adding some standard form field classes to your stylesheets means that as you create your forms you can attach the class to the fields as you go along.

Even if you change your mind later about how the forms should look, all you need do is update the stylesheet once, and all the forms that use those classes will take on the new look.

```
.text {
        font: 12px Verdana, Geneva, Arial, Helvetica,
sans-serif;
        width: 180px;
        background-color: #F0FFFF;
        color: #00696A;
        border: 1px solid #00696A;
}
}
```

1 A CSS CLASS FOR A TEXT FIELD

In your stylesheet, add the above details. This class, applied to a text input field, will give the field the styles as described. For a text area you can also add height.

```
.button {
        font-size: 12px;
        background-color: #007A7B;
        color: #ffffff;
        border-top: 2px solid #F0FFFF;
        border-left: 2px solid #F0FFFF;
        border-bottom: 2px solid #00696A;
        border-right: 2px solid #00696A;
}
```

2 A CSS CLASS FOR A BUTTON

In the same stylesheet, add the above. Here, we're defining the top, left, right and bottom borders separately to define a lighter colour for top and left.

```
<p><label>Name:
<br /><input type="text" name="fName" id="fName"
class="text" /></label></p>
<p><label>Email:
<br /><input type="text" name="fEmail" id="fEmail"
class="text" /></label></p>
<p><input type="submit" name="btnSend" id="btnSend"
value="Send" class="button" /></p>
```

3 APPLY CLASSES TO FORM ELEMENTS

We've added the classes to the form elements by using the Attribute class on the Input tag. You can also apply classes to text area and select tags.

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SITE SOS WWW.BLAKES-7.ORG.UK

THIS MONTH, CHRIS SCHMIDT CASTS AN ANALYTICAL EYE OVER A FAN SITE OF THE SEVENTIES SCI-FI TV SERIES *BLAKES 7*, AND COMES UP WITH A FEW HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS AND SOME SOUND ADVICE

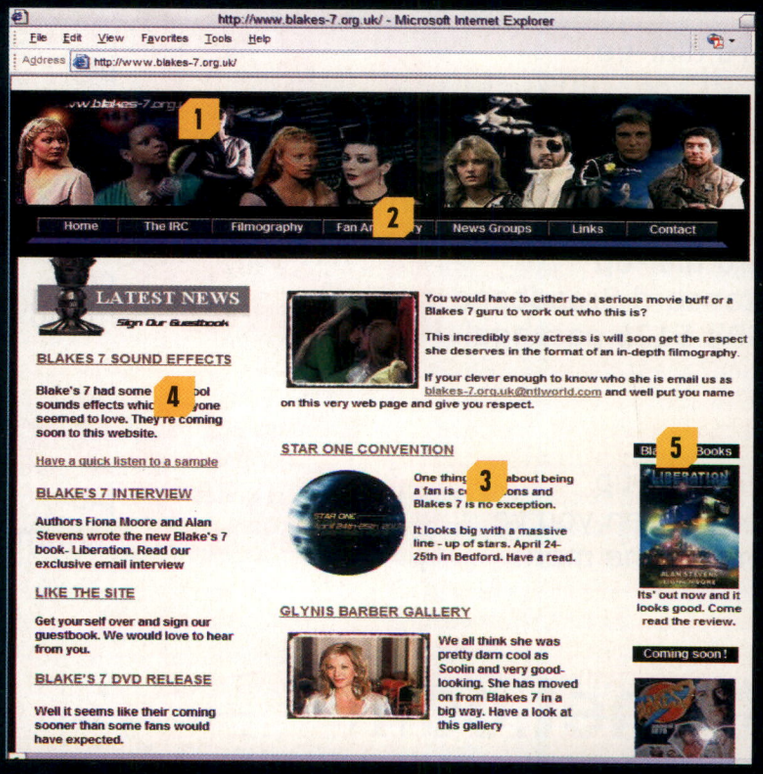
This month's site makeover turns to a fan site of the legendary Seventies sci-fi TV series, *Blakes 7*. The site in question (**www.blakes-7.org.uk**) has been created by Mike Szpak and is a classic example of how a fanatical addiction makes itself apparent on the Net. With a wide range of news, biography, artwork and reviews, the site has been set up to capture the imagination of similar thinking fans for whom the sporadic satisfaction of conventions is just too shortlived. It would appear as though the site is still in its infancy as content is still being developed, but the basic design and site structure are in place, and there's more than enough content for us to rethink the design of the site and make things a little more usable.

On first impressions the site lacks a cohesive identity. The design consists primarily of a graphic banner which montages of characters from the TV series and incorporates a regular linear navigation method, but the only mention of a site title is to be found in the URL, which is layered over the images in the regular Times Roman font. And as the banner changes by the page, this too becomes inconsistent.

The layout and stylesheets, however, are clear, although a little definition with the column layout that Mike has developed will help the viewer establish the structure more easily and draw the eye towards more focal parts of the design. Similarly, some of the titles and headings might benefit from a clearer identity to further support the structural layout of the page.

Apart from these details, the site goes some way to set the tone for the content and is sure to be of interest to the growing Blakes 7 community. What with a revival of the series being rumoured and supported by the investment put into the official site at **www.blakes7.com,** we're sure to start seeing a few more sites like Mike's starting to appear over the coming months. At present there's little competition apart from other fan sites, although the series' official appreciation site at **www.horizon.org.uk** is certainly leading the way. Mike's site may have a bit of catching up to do, but the basic idea and structure should set him up well as more and more fans discover the site to create their own micro-community.

BEFORE: HELP NEEDED!



1 NOT ENOUGH BRANDING

The design is headed by a banner graphic on each page that montages characters from the series. With little branding for the site itself, this turns itself into more of a generic Blakes 7 site. A unique logo for the site would make a world of difference.

2 LITTLE ROOM FOR DEVELOPMENT

The navigation is compact and concise and makes use of rollover images to highlight the relevant feature, but there is little room for extra buttons should the site content expand through development in future.

3 DEFINE THE STRUCTURE

The general content layout is fine, although the column layout might benefit from keeping such structure more clearly defined and giving the viewer a better idea of where the main content is located.

4 VARIETY WOULD HELP

The reliant stylesheet is clearly defined and makes the site easy to read, although a little more variety would support the layout by highlighting the parts of the text that should be more significant to the visitor.

5 CONSISTENCY LACKING

Images and titles need a little more consistency whether through graphic design or stylesheets. Even a simple drop shadow on headlines would help to add a little depth to the page, for example.

YOUR EXPERT

CHRIS SCHMIDT

Chris has been designing Web sites since the Mosaic browser allowed images to be embedded into Web pages. Since then he's worked for too many clients and agencies to remember, although some highlights include The British Council, Nike, Ovaltine, BUPA and The BSI.

When not writing for various graphic design and Internet magazines, he now runs his own Web design business, track5.co.uk, which specialises in creating sites for clients in the arts, and includes clients such as 2003 Mercury Prize nominee Joanna MacGregor, The Brodsky Quartet, the SPNM and Sir Malcolm Arnold.

AFTER: THE FINISHED RESULT

1 A CLEAR IDENTITY

By including the Blake's 7 logo we've made the layout clear as to the purpose of the site. The logo makes use of numerous colours that we've replicated for various elements within the interface to pull the page together. We'd recommend such a feature should remain consistent throughout a site to reinforce the site identity, while also acting as a link returning the viewer to the home page.

2 THE NAVIGATION

We've kept the navigation simple so as not to clutter the layout. Using colours taken from the main logo, we've also left plenty of room for additional categories should these become necessary in future. The glow affect was achieved through Photoshop layer styles by adapting the drop shadow effect.

3 PAGE DESIGN

The original site had little in the way of graphics that could be used, so we had to borrow a few images from related sites in order to further illustrate the subject. Although we'd recommend the logo remains consistent throughout the site, the larger image contained in the top right corner could be variable to reflect the content of the page.

4 STYLESHEET

We kept the stylesheet simple too, to make sure the reader has a good idea of how regular copy and subtitles fit together. A contrasting colour and clear font were necessary due to the amount of copy held on the page, to ensure the distinction between each of the main sections without becoming too cluttered or busy.

5 THE LAYOUT

Bold titles and horizontal bars helped to contain and group the layout into clearly identifiable sections to give a clearer overview of the site's content. We also brought the latest guestbook entries onto the home page to encourage the community feel that such sites usually rely on.

6 SECONDARY CONTENT

We moved this to the foot of the page to make room for the main points of interest. We also applied the same effect to the images as we had to the titles, to add a sense of depth to the page and lift the content from the background.

ON TEST

OUR RATING SYSTEM

Every product we review on the following pages is rigorously tested by an experienced industry journalist. This means that our reviews are unbiased and impartial. Many magazines throw ratings at you with no explanation of what they mean, but our tests are different. Every rating you see is presented alongside a brief description of why we've chosen to award this score. This way, we hope we can give you a fuller picture of the program or hardware in question. Here's how our verdict system works:

Features

Does the product have enough functionality to make it worthwhile? Has the manufacturer thrown in features to blind you with science? We explain here.

Ease of use

Here, you'll discover if a product can be picked up and used straight out of the box easily. It's not all about being beginner-friendly, though, and we're looking for intuitiveness and an easy path to impressive results.

Quality of results

A product may be easy to operate, but does it provide you with the results you want to achieve? This category often tells you most about a product, as results are what ultimately determines its success or not.

Value for money

Does the product's feature range merit its price tag? Are you paying over the odds for a one-trick pony, or will the product prove a valuable addition to your toolkit?

Final score

Every product we review is given a final percentage as a summary of its overall performance. Look for scores about 85% for a top class piece of software or hardware.

Internet WebDesigner Star buy

Products which receive 90% or more are given the coveted *Practical Internet Web Designer* award. Only the most outstanding products are awarded a score in the nineties, and this rating marks that product as 'must-have'.

ON TEST THIS MONTH

SWiSHpix 122
You want a photo album but can't be bothered with the hassle of doing it yourself? Look no further...

Epson Perfection 3170 PHOTO 124
Boasting features that will please beginners and experts alike, how does this scanner measure up?

CorelDRAW Graphics Suite 11 126
They're all bringing out software suites these days, and this is Corel's entry into the multiple program package race

Logitech QuickCam Sphere 128
It looks like an extra from Dr Who, and it follows you as you move around, but is this Webcam any cop?

Book reviews 129
Forget about reading those Valentine's Day cards, and see what you should be feasting your eyes upon

SWISHPIX

PROMISING TO TURN YOUR DIGITAL PHOTOS INTO ONLINE GALLERIES IN MINUTES, WE SEE HOW THIS BUDGET SOFTWARE MEASURES UP

Creating photo albums for the Web isn't the longwinded and tiresome task it once was. Way back in the mists of Internet time, the intrepid would-be album creator would have to delve deep into hand-coding and spend far too long manually tweaking images to create the all-important thumbnails. The result would not only be a frustrated Webmaster, but also a less than effective gallery page.

Savvy program developers quickly realised that the boom in digital cameras meant a phalanx of amateur snappers were suddenly desperate to get their pictures on the Web. Before you knew it, shareware album creators were cropping up all over the shop, and even the latest versions of Photoshop and Photoshop Elements sport impressive gallery options. Creating a tool that converts a folder full of images into thumbnails then lays them out on individual gallery pages isn't the most difficult task for a programmer, but building something that provides users with the capabilities to produce effective, worthwhile results is an entirely different matter.

SWiSHpix is the latest tool from the productive team at SWiSHzone, the crew behind the fantastic Flash wannabe tool, SWiSHmax, that we reviewed a couple of issues ago. On first glance, you might think that SWiSHpix is a simple tool designed for fairly standard results, but the wizard-based interface disguises a number of tweaking options that should eventually have you churning out unique galleries by the dozen.

The team at SWiSHzone has gone all out to alleviate any stresses you might face in building galleries, so you'll find a staggeringly straightforward five-step creation method. Pick your photos, edit them, choose a theme, decorate your album with individual flourishes, then publish it using the method you choose. If you're not fussy, you can have a perfectly presentable gallery within three minutes of opening the program. Spend more than a fraction of a second glancing at each option, however, and you can really start to appreciate SWiSHpix for the impressive tool that it is.

The inclusion of a fairly basic image editor demonstrates the added touches that are included in SWiSHpix, and while these will never challenge your Photoshops, the simple tools will more than suffice for all but the most badly taken of images. As you can imagine, though, the main power of SWiSHpix comes in the creation of the album using the built-in themes. Each of the supplied styles has been created with a specific purpose in mind, so you're treated to joys like snow scenes and discos. These sound horrible, but the way that they're created makes the SWiSHpix themes much more palatable. Basically, each theme is made up of a Swish object, which can be anything, but in the case of the built-in themes is always a number of cartoony vector shapes superimposed over each other.

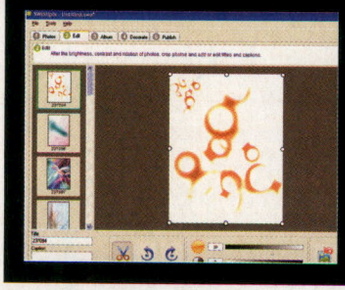
You'll also find a wealth of other tools that let you tweak the built-in templates, including the size,

The effects you can achieve with a minimum of effort are startling, and people will think you've spent ages on your site

SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	SWiSHpix
URL:	www.swishzone.com
System requirements:	PC Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP, PIII 300MHz, 64Mb RAM, 800x600 pixels and 256 colour display

IN DETAIL: STEP INTO GALLERY HEAVEN WITH SWiSHpix



Once you've chosen your gallery pictures, SWiSHpix presents you with a number of basic editing tools so you can adjust the brightness and contrast of images, and perform tasks such as cropping and rotating.

With your pictures sorted, it's now time to choose your theme from the supplied range of built-in templates. As ever, there are a number of tools that enable you to tweak your image gallery for best results.

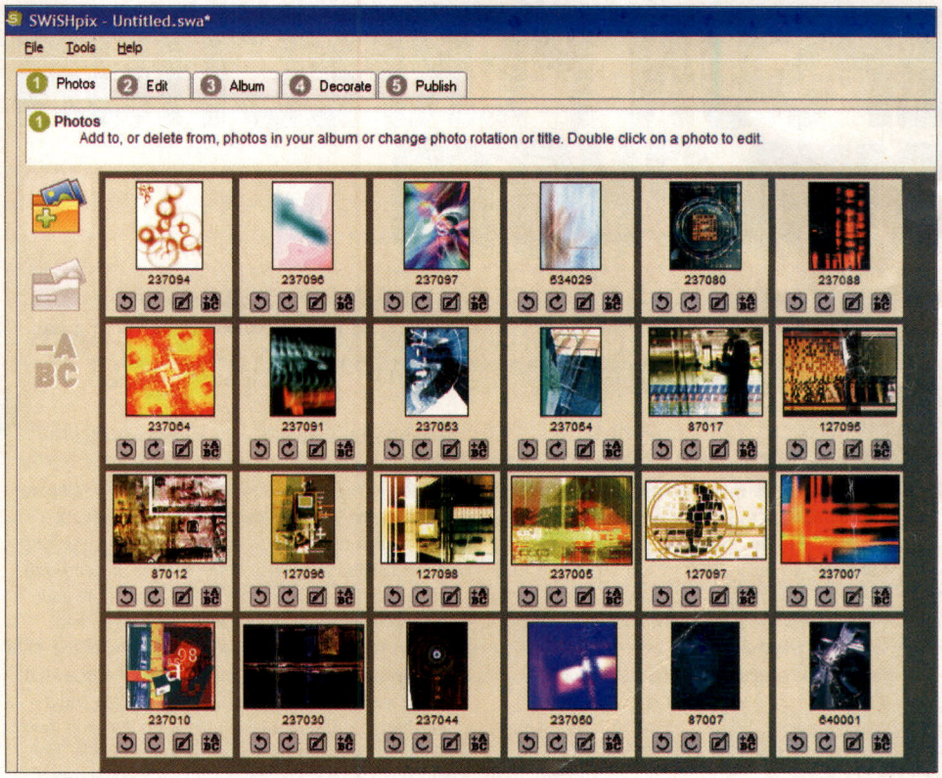
"THE WIZARD-BASED INTERFACE DISGUISES A NUMBER OF TWEAKING OPTIONS THAT SHOULD HAVE YOU CHURNING OUT UNIQUE GALLERIES BY THE DOZEN"

shape and placement of any text on the page as well as the all-important option to let you configure the way thumbnails are displayed.

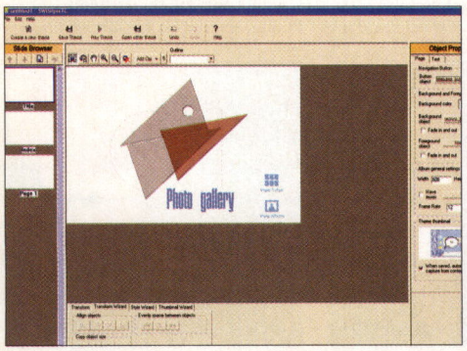
Unlike most other gallery creators, SWiSHpix allows you to add your own 'callouts' and clipart supplied with SWiSHpix – essentially an easy way to furnish even the most static of galleries with some cool moving effects. You can also add music or a variety of transitions to each picture within your gallery, allowing you to further enhance your finished product. Once you've sorted your gallery, SWiSHpix gives you a range of publishing options, including the facility to save your finished gallery as an executable file or onto a CD. More importantly, though, you have the option here to export your gallery to the Web – and you'll also find a couple of settings to let you further configure your gallery to your liking.

The finished result of all this is a decent enough gallery, although serious Web designers might baulk at the simplistic pages created by the program. Many advanced users will find the program's templates limiting as well, although it's in this area where SWiSHpix pulls an ace from its sleeve. Instead of tying you to the fairly basic templates supplied with the program, the team at SWiSHzone has created a dedicated Theme Creator that lets you create your own templates. For some reason, this is only available as a download hidden away in the depths of the SWiSHzone site, but it's well worth hunting down.

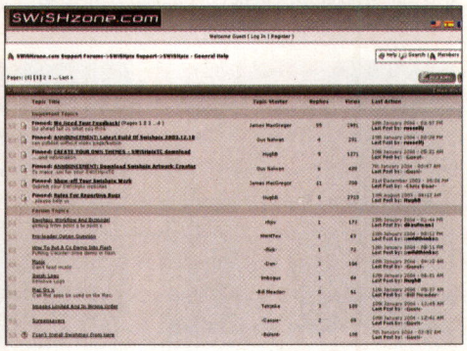
Essentially, this is a program in its own right that allows you to create your own templates. It's not as easy as it should be, and we think that many people will find the Theme Creator confusing at first, but you have to applaud SWiSHzone for making such a tool available in the first place. ■



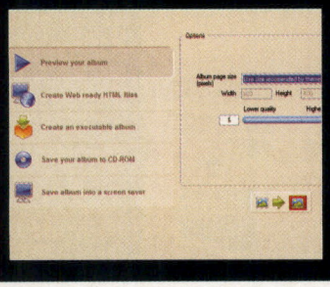
■ Importing images into SWiSHpix is a doddle with the program's intuitive and straightforward file-browsing system



■ You can add to SWiSHpix's features by downloading Theme Creator, a standalone package that does what it says on the tin



■ The SWiSHpix forum is a mine of information, and you can pick up a variety of plug-ins to enhance the program further



■ When you're happy with the theme and all the adjustments you've made to make your gallery as individual as possible, you can use SWiSHpix's many options for exporting your gallery to a variety of formats.

■ With a little effort you can achieve results like this. The great thing about SWiSHpix is that once you start delving deeper into the interface, you can really improve on the galleries the program creates.

VERDICT

Product: SWiSHpix
Price [inc VAT]: £16
Telephone: n/a
URL: www.swishzone.com

Features

■ With a wealth of tools designed to make things easy, you can't grumble about SWiSHpix's feature set

Ease of use

■ If you take the quick route it's a doddle. But start delving deeper, and the learning curve is steep

Quality of results

■ You won't end up with the most unusual or life-changing gallery, but the results can't be scoffed at

Value for money

■ For under £20 you're getting a decent package with a wealth of add-ons to let you tweak the features

SUMMARY

■ The number of gallery programs continues to grow, and SWiSHpix deserves credit for attempting something different: running everything through SWF gives you far more tweaking options. The Theme Creator is a bonus, but we reckon that subsequent versions will improve upon the SWiSHpix formula.

FINAL SCORE: 82%

EPSON PERFECTION 3170 PHOTO

BIGGER THAN THE AVERAGE SCANNER, EPSON'S LATEST OFFERING LOOKS THE PART AS WELL, BUT HOW DOES IT FARE WHEN IT COMES TO PICTURE QUALITY? WE RUN THE RULE

Buying a scanner used to be easy. You could choose from the cheap and cheerful range of tools that would cost you under £100 but provide less than impressive results. Alternatively you could opt for quality, but you'd have to shell out at least £500 for the privilege. The market was divided by the stark lines of beginner and expert – anyone in between had to pay their money and take their chances.

Now however, it's a different ball game. Scanner manufacturers have cottoned on to the fact that loads of Web designers are keen to take high quality scans of their pictures, but don't class scanning functionality as their number one concern when it comes to buying new design kit. The result is a gamut of mid-priced devices providing a decent wealth of functions at a rate that won't scare too many designers away.

The Perfection 3170 PHOTO is at the top of Epson's range of home scanners designed for the more demanding user. Priced at a very reasonable £199, it comes equipped with a wealth of accessories that should entice quite a few customers into parting with more pounds than they intended. Boasting a far chunkier visage than the rest of its Epson siblings, the 3170 is large enough to inspire confidence, but small enough to be lugged about from PC to Mac and back again.

After you've installed the built-in scanning software, operating the 3170 is a doddle. Don't worry about starting up a raft of programs and hoping they pick up on the TWAIN compliance of the scanner. Instead, you simply press the Start button at the front of the unit. This automatically gets the Epson software up and running. It's worth noting that the front end of the 3170 contains four quick access buttons: as well as the Start button, you'll also find an Email, Scan to Web and a Copy button. These are fairly ubiquitous items on most modern scanners so they're hardly revolutionary, but they really do make a difference to the speed with which you can achieve a range of functions.

Ease of use

The Epson scanner software is pretty easy to use, with functions cleverly arranged in descending order down the interface. Choose your mode, make any alterations to the image, and you're ready to scan – it really is that simple, and you should find yourself with a fairly good scan within about 20 seconds of clicking on the Start button. The Mode Selection menu at the top of the interface makes a huge difference to the results you can achieve though, and to the time you spend tinkering with any preview before committing to a scan proper. In fact, we'd suggest that this mode setting is the single most important aspect of the 3170, and will affect your final scan more than any other option. Full Auto mode automatically tweaks the settings of your preview scan according to Epson's inbuilt guidelines, giving you a fairly good quality scan without asking you to bother about adjusting sliders yourself. Home mode gives you a few easy settings to adjust – taking in options such as brightness and contrast. Again, you can achieve startling results fairly quickly, and almost anyone who's used a graphics tool before should be able to significantly improve their images using this mode.

Going professional

The Professional mode, as the name suggests, contains a gamut of high-end options designed for more experienced users to alter every conceivable setting

SPECIFICATIONS

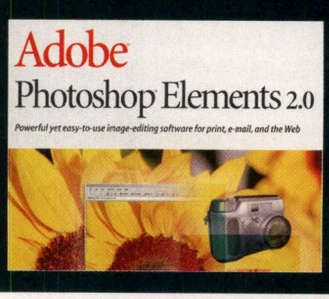
Product:	Epson Perfection 3170 PHOTO
Web address:	www.epson.co.uk
Maximum resolution:	12,800dpi
Maximum bit-depth:	48-bit
System requirements:	PC Windows 98/Me/2000 Professional/XP, Pentium 233MHz processor, 128Mb RAM, 320Mb hard disk space
System requirements:	Mac Mac OS 8.6-9.x or Mac OS X 10.2 or later, PowerPC G3, 128Mb RAM, 180Mb hard disk space

■ The difference in the results you achieve according to the mode you work in can be seen quite clearly with these images (from left, a normal unaided scan, Full Auto mode, Professional mode)

IN DETAIL: A LOOK AT THE EPSON 3170 BUNDLE

■ The built-in scanning software is more than adequate, and offers a wealth of tools for tinkering with your images before scanning. Splitting the interface into three sections according to your expertise is a winning idea.

■ Once you've tweaked your scan the way you'd like, click on the Preview button to see a high resolution depiction of your changes. When you're happy, simply click on Scan to perform the scan.



■ Photoshop Elements 2 comes bundled with the package as well. This is one of the finest budget image editors on the market, and offers you even more graphical tweaking options.

The Epson Perfection 3170 PHOTO close-up

Get to know the intuitive and powerful Epson scanner with our walkthrough of its buttons

Copy
If you want to get yourself a high resolution copy of a photo or printed object, simply click on this button and Epson will send the image to your printer and save you the hassle of touching it up in photo-editing software

Scan for the Web
Got Web space you want to upload your images to and can't be bothered with the palaver of scanning and editing then uploading manually? Allow this simple button to take care of your every need

Email
Many people spend tons of money on a scanner simply so they can email their pictures of long-lost relatives to the long-lost relatives who feature in the pictures. Quickly turn your photos into emails with the help of this button

Scan button
The most important part of the scanner, this single button automatically kicks off the supplied Epson software and helps provide you with a perfect scan seconds after you've inserted your image to be scanned

before scanning. Histograms, curves and unsharp mask filters are the name of the game here, and even the simple section on brightness and contrast contains enough sliders to be impressive. Even if you don't class yourself as a graphics expert, we think you'll quickly move up to this mode simply because of the complete control it gives you over the quality of your final scan.

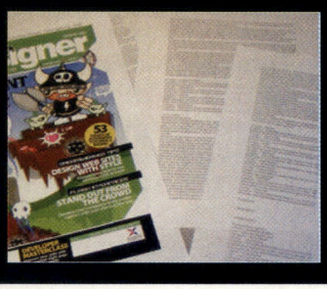
It's worth pointing out that, as you can see from the scanned images on this page, each mode provides far better results than you'd get with no alterations (in Professional mode with all settings unticked). The more advanced modes also contain brilliant options to let you restore colour and remove dust from your image. In our experience though, even in Professional mode the Epson software only enables the options it believes you're going to need; for some reason, we couldn't access the Dust Removal tool – to our collective chagrin.

In terms of results, the 3170 should be commended. With a maximum resolution of 12,800dpi and bit depth of 48-bit colour, you're looking at high quality images. Even on USB 1.1 (the 3170 is equipped for USB 2.0), we found that the 3170 presented us with a 300dpi 48-bit A4 image in around 30 seconds. Considering the scanner comes with an additional A4 Auto Document Feeder for high volume scanning, this speed would seem entirely necessary – and Epson claims a scanning speed in this instance of up to 4.5 pages per minute.

If you're on the lookout for a high quality scanner that won't blind you with science, comes equipped with a barrage of quality software (including Photoshop Elements 2) and has a price that won't make you cry, the Epson Perfection 3170 PHOTO is ideal. Providing excellent results in double-quick time, this is a great device for getting images onto your machine. ■

"THE EPSON SCANNER SOFTWARE IS EASY TO USE, WITH FUNCTIONS RUNNING IN ORDER DOWN THE INTERFACE"

■ It's not a new technology, but it's worth having text-reading software with your scanner. Shove in your text document, and the software will present you with an editable text document in seconds.



■ Unlike many of its scanning contemporaries, the 3170 PHOTO is able to scan multiple documents. Simply place your pages in the Auto Document Feeder and let the Epson take the strain for you.

VERDICT

Product: Epson Perfection 3170 PHOTO
Price [inc VAT]: £199
Telephone: 0800 220 546
URL: www.epson.co.uk

Features ■■■■□
■ As well as a stunning scanner, there's also a good selection of software to ensure you get perfect pics

Ease of use ■■■■■
■ Install the built-in software and just press the button at the front to start scanning. Couldn't be easier

Quality of results ■■■■□
■ Scans are very good indeed, and the built-in adjustment options improve matters even further

Value for money ■■■■□
■ For a fraction under £200 you expect a lot of quality, and the 3170 gives you this with distinction

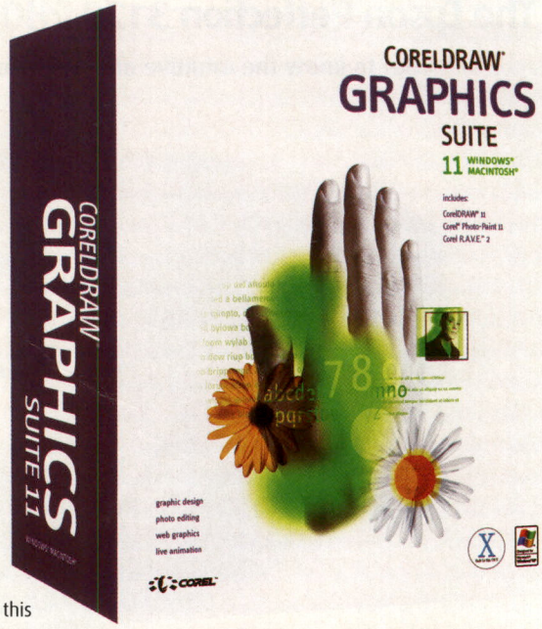
SUMMARY

■ The 3170 PHOTO is one of the new breed of scanners that combines beginner-friendly ease of use with advanced functionality. In addition to presenting you with crisp, clean scans, the 3170 bundle comes with some excellent editing software. All in all, a great buy for the money.

FINAL SCORE: 89%

CORELDRAW GRAPHICS SUITE 11

DESKTOP DESIGNERS CAN NOW GET THEIR HANDS ON COREL'S LATEST IMAGING PACKAGES IN ONE CONVENIENT BOX. WE EXAMINE WHETHER ITS MANY NEW FEATURES CAN CUT IT ON THE WEB



In recent times, the concept of a software bundle has really found favour with keen buyers of a certain market. The convenience of paying one (usually discounted) price for a whole myriad of related applications in one box has also allowed customers to enjoy a level of compatibility that they may normally fail to realise. Product families such as Adobe's print and publishing centred Creative Suite, or Macromedia's Web-authoring arsenal, Studio MX, usually offer exclusive features which improve the workflow of avid users.

It will come as no surprise then that fans of CorelDRAW's army of graphical packages can also get their hands on a similar one-stop solution, in the shape of the new Graphics Suite 11. Available for both Windows and Mac, this collection of around a dozen full programs and utilities promises to cover many of the key bases any digital designer could expect. To use an appropriate artistic analogy, the wealth of different painting and drawing techniques available could probably only be bettered by teaming up the creative mastery of Warhol, Van Gogh and Da Vinci.

Centred around the 11th instalment of flagship title CorelDRAW, the powerful possibilities for print and Web duties are complemented by the inclusion of Corel Photo-Paint and R.A.V.E. 2. Not only does this represent convenient options for photo editing and manipulation, but the added incentive of optimised Web graphics or effective vector-based animation will be most tempting for anyone hoping to spruce up their sites. Add to this the conversion and screen capture facilities of Trace and Capture 11, and you're left with some superb general scanning and font-management utilities to boot. The box is also just big enough to squeeze in a huge array of clipart images and photos, alongside the chunky set of reference manuals. It's then just a case of popping the first of the five installation discs into your machine and taking your pick of where to begin.

SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	CorelDRAW Graphics Suite 11
URL:	www.corel.co.uk
Format:	PC and Mac
System requirements:	PC Windows 98-XP, Pentium 2 processor, 200MHz, 64Mb RAM, 250Mb Disk space 1024x768 Display
System requirements:	Mac OS 10.1, Power Mac G3 or higher, 128Mb RAM, 250Mb Disk space, 1024x768 Display

Spoilt rotten

Once you've installed Graphics Suite, your first stop is most likely to be CorelDRAW 11. This is essentially the all-round imaging and drawing environment that many of you will already be familiar with, aside from the numerous new enhancements. Primarily suited to vector-based work, its document-based workspace makes it ideal for designing full colour presentations or desktop publications. The interface is pretty clean and straightforward, following a very similar layout to Paint Shop Pro. Freehand and painting tools are pushed conveniently to the edge of the screen, within a dockable toolbar that also houses unique interactive effects and a healthy variety of preset shapes.

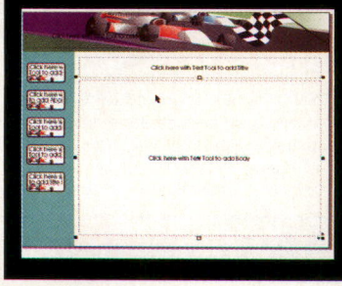
A noticeable difference however, is the thoughtful approach to tweaking object properties such as position and size, or tool characteristics such as line width. These are kept in full view at all times in an equally accessible panel at the top of the page, and maintaining control over what you are doing is always within reach. In fact, this point is again extended with the neat options for importing and exporting your own customised workspace. Changes to the default interface can be named, saved and swapped between remote copies of CorelDRAW, giving the experience a far more personal touch.

Another new feature of some note is the addition of support for symbols and the reuse of generic image elements. Clearly influenced by Flash's ability to compile libraries of replicated movie clips, it allows you to add instances of existing text and graphics into new projects. As if that wasn't enough, the excellent amount of options for Web deployment further broadens the package's appeal. Drawn objects can be optimised to look faultless in multiple browsers, while form components such as checkboxes, buttons and even rollovers can all be easily generated.

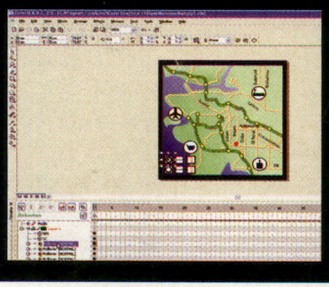
Package deals

If CorelDRAW 11 only hints at what this suite can offer to online development, then it is left to Corel R.A.V.E. 2 to be more blatant. This standalone animation studio adopts largely the same look and feel as its partner program, although the inclusion of a timeline bar is just enough to distinguish the two. Any similarities to Flash are immediately obvious, and even acknowledged with cross-application support. During development, movie sequences can actually be previewed in a chosen Web browser via Flash itself, while exporting projects as SWF files is also enhanced.

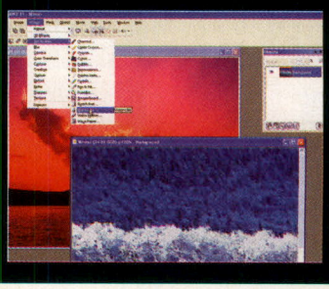
IN DETAIL: WHAT CAN CORELDRAW GRAPHICS SUITE 11 DO?



Apart from simply creating static Web images for your site, you can also use CorelDRAW 11 to map out page templates. These can be exported to HTML, while all sorts of interactive image maps and rollovers can easily be created.



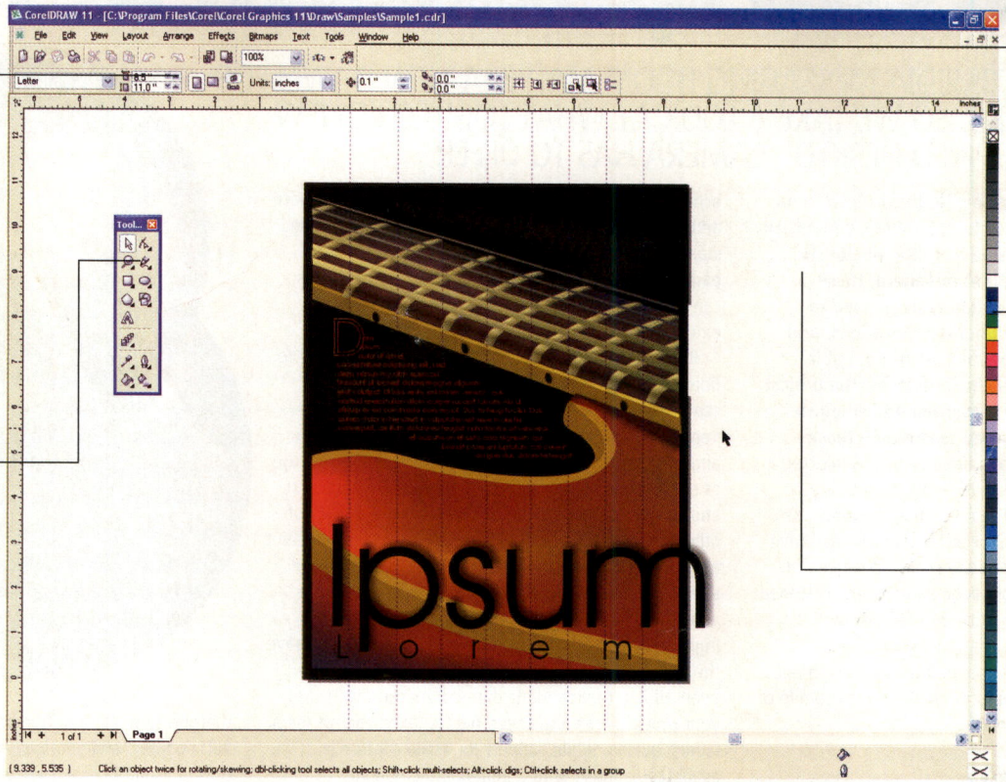
Authoring more sophisticated dynamic content is taken care of by R.A.V.E. 2, with a flavour of Flash MX. The CorelDRAW interface is joined by a quite intuitive timeline panel, plus improved support for symbols and exporting movies.



Digital photography buffs will be impressed by the inclusion of PHOTO-PAINT 11, with its vast array of tools. Not only can you cure your snaps of problems such as red-eye, but also apply a range of stunning effects and filters.

CorelDRAW 11 up close

Familiarise yourself with Graphics Suite's main package with our essential walkthrough of its features



Tools/Object Properties bar
This handy panel remains in view at all times and is used to set various object and tool characteristics such as page positioning, line widths and sizing

Tool palette
All the main image-editing tools like those for drawing, adding shapes, text and fill tools are conveniently grouped together in a floating dockable box

Main menu
CorelDRAW's main menu bar not only gives you additional access to tools, but also enables PDF publishing and the export of images into HTML documents

Color palette
The pencil-thin Color palette is so compact you may initially miss it, but whole schemes can be loaded in and there's plenty of room for custom swatches

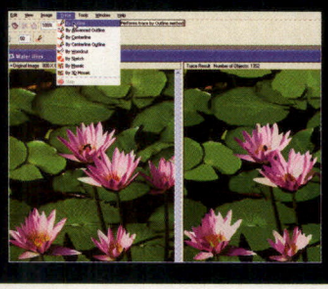
Document view
Your workspace is concentrated on a full-page Document view where image objects can be drawn and layered accordingly.

"IF CORELDRAW 11 ONLY HINTS AT WHAT THIS SUITE CAN OFFER TO ONLINE DEVELOPMENT, THEN IT IS LEFT TO COREL R.A.V.E. 2 TO BE MORE BLATANT..."

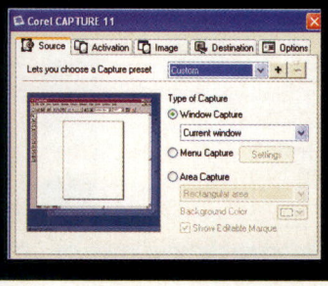
What's nice here is that any embedded sprites and symbols that have been used are maintained intact, so that movie sizes are kept as low as possible.

Another equally good touch is that text can be optionally packaged as text rather than vector curves, while an increased level of behavioural features opens wider doors for interactivity. Individual frames can have all manner of built-in actions attached to them, ranging from general playback to the toggling of audio, visibility states and the loading of other movies. With all this in mind, R.A.V.E. 2 does prove itself to be an extremely flexible and possibly more accessible solution for authors seeking a way into dynamic content.

As for Graphics Suite 11 in general, the verdict is somewhat harder to pin down. Apart from the two main packages covered most in this review, the potential it holds for any one specific application isn't terrific. We've attempted to focus on the Web design aspects, whereas the combination of the three main packages does rely on a much broader bias. It is from this perspective, taking into account the large selection of software on show, that users and possible buyers will find the most value. ■



■ One of the most notable inclusions in the Graphics Suite pack is Trace, and its ability to convert bitmapped images into vectors. This clever app has a range of options, and is capable of some magnificent results before your very eyes.



■ Those in need of a screen-capturing utility will not be disappointed with CorelCAPTURE 11. Here you can set how much of the desktop you want to take a snapshot of, along with options for triggering the application itself.

VERDICT

Product: CorelDRAW Graphics Suite 11
Price: £363 (www.dabs.com)
Telephone: 0870 7740202
URL: www.corel.co.uk

Features ■■■■□
■ The software, utilities and resources will appeal to anyone seeking an all-round imaging solution

Ease of use ■■■□□
■ Corel's family of products share the same accessible interface, making learning each app much easier

Quality of results ■■■□□
■ Though good photo and bitmap support is available, the predominantly vector-based look limits things

Value for money ■■■□□
■ Good – if you want professional-looking print media, presentation graphics and a dash of Web content

SUMMARY

■ Aside from Corel's unique features, there isn't much in Graphics Suite for Web authors specifically. Support for producing optimised online imagery and interactive content in CorelDRAW is nice, but it can't rival the likes of Fireworks. Still, more general desktop publishers or designers will find it ideal.

FINAL SCORE: 82%

LOGITECH QUICKCAM SPHERE

THE MULTIMEDIA MESSAGING BOOM MARKS A NEW DAWN FOR WEB VIDEO, SO WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT LOGITECH'S NEW SCI-FI-INSPIRED DESKTOP CAMERA HAS TO OFFER

For some time now Webcams have done little more than fulfil people's voyeuristic tendencies. Aside from the obviously more salacious applications out there, these beady digital eyes have mainly been used to monitor remote environments or locations, and their inherent usefulness has been negligible. Often supplied by fairly cheap devices, the typical delivery of grainy, low resolution and sluggish video could also be blamed for holding these products back. Fortunately broadband has injected new life into online possibilities and particularly instant messaging. The likes of Yahoo, Windows XP and MSN are all behind successful services that have brought video conference-style communications to the masses. Market leader Logitech has now cottoned on to this new killer app with the release of its QuickCam Sphere, which features revolutionary motorised technology. But is its futuristic design and awesome ability to track facial movements capable of exciting desktop directors?

Changing zooms

One of QuickCam Sphere's most distinctive characteristics has to be its unique build and design. What soon becomes apparent is that the unit is actually convertible from a petite configuration into the more stalk-like form you may have seen. This is achieved by literally prising apart the pod-shaped base and lens capsule before appending each to a supplied stand. The final assembly is very stable, with all the parts finished in swish shiny black plastic, and users can position the camera in either its compact or extended state, depending on their workspace.

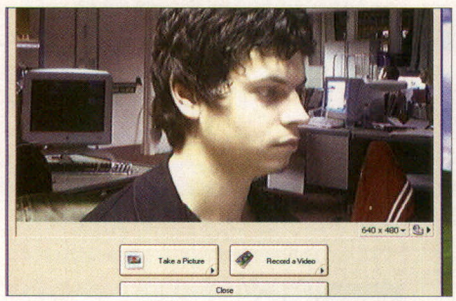
Before you get to see it in action, you're advised to finish installing all the drivers and utilities from the supplied CD. This is simple enough, and yields some important bundled utilities that will help get you up and running. Connecting the camera is then just a case of plugging the 9ft cable into the nearest vacant port and firing up the main control centre. Here you'll not only find quick links to the latest messaging clients, but also Logitech's own QuickCapture suite. The whole thing makes the camera's features really accessible and even allows you to take still photos or highly impressive video sequences in one click. You then have the option of compiling photo albums on the spot or even adding text captions during various junctions of your movies. Emailing saved files is taken care of via a launch button, while support for audio capture is available to those with additional microphones.

All-seeing eye

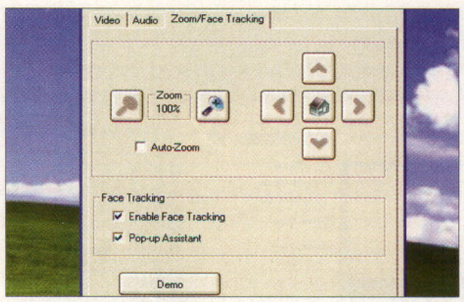
The thoughtful extras that accompany this camera are extremely well done and highly commendable, but they cannot compare with the sheer wonderment of actually using the product. As a first of its kind, the Sphere's key selling point is its astonishing tracking functionality – the lens is intelligent enough to pick up peoples' faces and follow movement of the head. The mechanics behind this feat work incredibly well, and should be seen to be believed. Video conversationalists will undoubtedly spend ages playing with it. The only problem is that once a few people start to crowd the device it gets slightly confused, but a special 'Home' button can be pressed to re-centre its glare. For some reason this seems to be less necessary when collapsed, which helped to alleviate some slight glitches with the stalk connectors. Also, although a manual control option is available, Logitech has chosen not to permit remote operation for security reasons. Couple this with the fact that the camera's rotation only reaches a maximum of 180 degrees, and you may have misgivings about buying it purely as a hook-up for your site. Having said that, this is a professionally priced peripheral that not only captures surprisingly good images but also has a clever novelty factor. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	Logitech QuickCam Sphere
URL:	www.logitech.com
Height:	22.8 cm (9") stand
Format:	PC and Mac
System requirements:	PC Pentium 2 400, Celeron, AMD Athlon+Windows 2000/Me/XP 64Mb RAM 200Mb Disk space USB
System requirements:	Mac OS 10.1.5 + 128Mb RAM 200Mb Disk space USB



■ The QuickCam's software has all you need to preview its great images, while grabbing still snaps and video



■ You can easily switch the face tracking feature on from the control panel or move its lens manually

VERDICT

Product: Logitech QuickCam Sphere
Price [inc VAT]: £99.99
Telephone: 020 7309 0127
URL: www.logitech.com

Features ■■■■□
■ The incredible face tracker is the biggest draw, but don't underestimate the other great utilities

Ease of use ■■■□□
■ Setting everything up is simple, and the intuitive onscreen control centre has everything you'll need

Quality of results ■■■□□
■ Apart from the occasional hiccup, the technology works superbly and delivers great images

Value for money ■■■■□
■ Although the price may initially seem steep, the quality of the build and the innovation is worth it

SUMMARY

■ Webcams seem to have found their niche market and manufacturers are keen to exploit their appeal. If the QuickCam Sphere is anything to go by, buyers can look forward to refreshing new features. It delivers a worthwhile novelty value, plus great pictures to match a funky design.

FINAL SCORE: 88%

BOOK REVIEWS

A MIXED BAG OF BOOK REVIEWS THIS MONTH, AS WE TUCK INTO WEB COLOURS, PAINT SHOP PRO 8 AND THE HEADY WORLD OF ACCESSIBILITY

COLOR FOR WEB SITES

When you thumb through this book for the first time you can easily be won over by just how good it looks. The bright cover and bold use of typefaces on the opening few pages quickly suggest that this is a volume designers in general will adore. It also follows its title to the word, providing all sorts of interesting lessons in how relationships of colour can be most expertly employed. Among all this you'll find a unique insight into how display screens perform their rendering, and learn about the often bewildering varieties of colour encoding. However, a large portion of the content is taken up by sprawling charts of Web safe colours. While this is both appealing to look at and quite useful as a reference, it may be argued that this kind of resource could be freely downloaded online. On a more practical level, some of the pages that feature broad swathes of unbroken colour do offer advice on how certain schemes can be read. Surprising little facts, such as the way orange is used by Americans to denote inexpensive products, could influence the way you decorate your pages. ■

VERDICT

Author: Molly E. Holzschlag
Price: £19.99
ISBN: 2-88046-741-1
Publisher: RotoVision
URL: www.rotovision.com

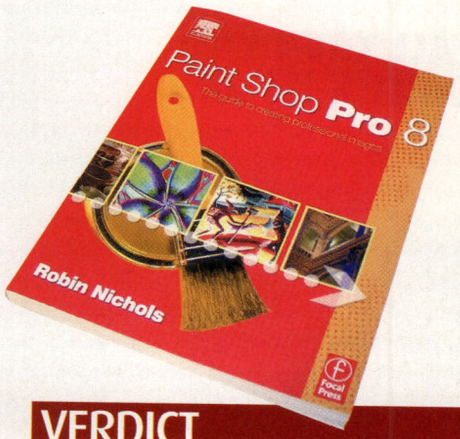
SUMMARY

■ Apart from being a visual feast, this publication offers information that all media designers will delight in. Others may find the colour chart sections a slight cop-out.

FINAL SCORE: 87%

PAINT SHOP PRO 8: THE GUIDE TO CREATING PROFESSIONAL IMAGES

Learning a new graphics package is a double-edged sword – it can be daunting just getting to grips with the basic tools, never mind fiddling with layers and complicated effects. Even when you've mastered everything, there are no guarantees that the work you produce will be good. However, this book will make your life much easier. You'll not only find detailed breakdowns of PSP 8's interface and how basic features operate, but also an introduction into more advanced territory. With a distinct bias towards digital photography, its many sections on image correction, distortion, special effects and textures really do communicate tricky techniques. Where it excels is with a significant amount of well presented and informative screen annotations that break up the heavier content superbly. Add to this a great chapter on Web graphics and a comprehensive 'Jargon Buster' section and you have a topnotch title. ■



VERDICT

Author: Robin Nichols
Price: £16.99
ISBN: 0-240-51698-2
Publisher: Focal Press
URL: www.focalpress.com

SUMMARY

■ This well-written book covers everything about PSP 8 that beginners and intermediates will find worthwhile, with a commendably effective use of images throughout.

FINAL SCORE: 89%

DESIGNING WEB SITES FOR EVERY AUDIENCE

Web designers agree that accessibility and marketability are vital. It's therefore odd that *Designing Web Sites for Every Audience* is rare in the way it tackles these topics. Written by e-marketing expert and consultant Ilise Benum, it uses an authoritative yet exciting style to put across techniques that any HTML-slinger worth their salt should know. Intros into usability engineering, user-centred design and cognitive considerations within site design are all explained in a way that won't baffle or bore. The pages are economical on text and the general layout is good, with later chapters making great use of full-colour images. A series of chapters is also dedicated to practical case studies, where earlier theory is put into practice. The many tips are beautifully illustrated and demonstrate how successful organisations keep people coming back. In fact, the practical advice is so good that the book is a great reminder of how things should be done to developers of all levels. ■

VERDICT

Author: Ilise Benum
Price: £24.99
ISBN: 1-58180-301-X
Publisher: HOW Design Books
URL: www.howdesign.com

SUMMARY

■ This is an excellent example of the kind of book that could make a difference to the quality of the Web. Its blend of academic advice, vibrant design and case study format is a joy.

FINAL SCORE: 91%

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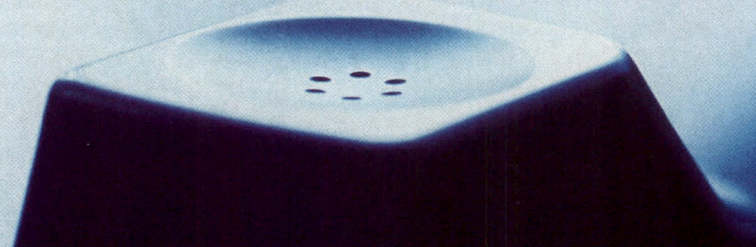

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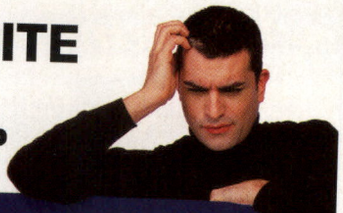

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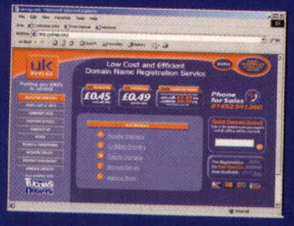

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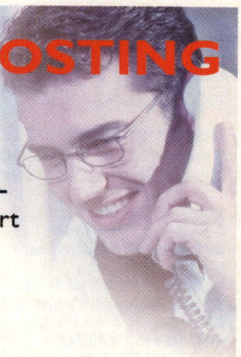

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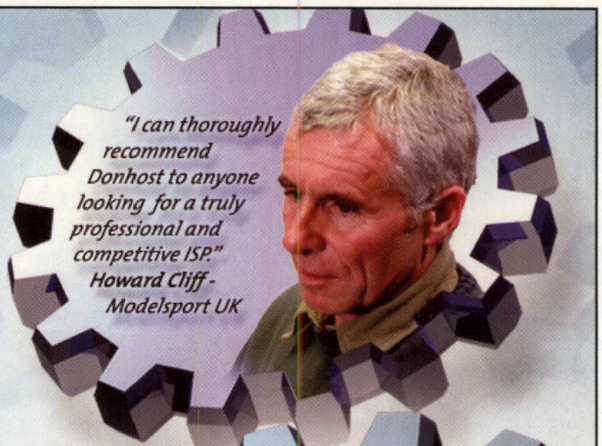

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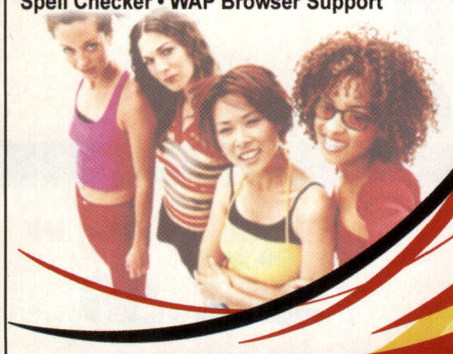

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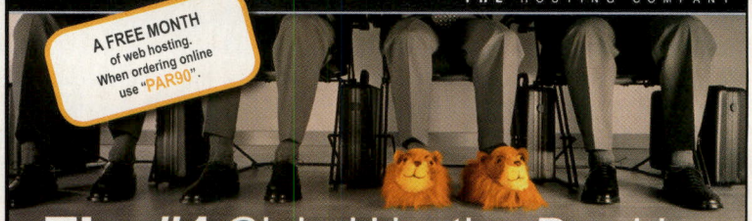

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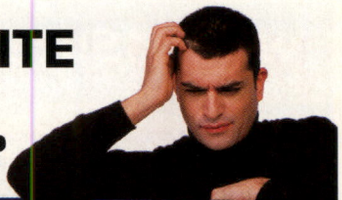

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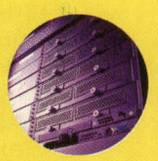

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YOUR FREE COVER DISC

ON YOUR DISC

HOW TO RUN YOUR DISC

Running the disc

The minimum recommended specification to run the *Practical Internet Web Designer* CD is 800 X 600 screen resolution, 32Mb RAM, 16-bit colour, Windows 95/98/Me, Intel Pentium or compatible P166. We recommend that all users shut down all other applications while running the CD.

The CD will autorun in Windows 95/98. For users without autorun enabled go to the Start menu, select RUN and then type d:\PIWD.exe (replacing 'd' with your CD drive) and press 'Return'.

Licensing

Some software on the CD-ROM is shareware, which means that if you continue to use the program you should register it with the author. Freeware programs can be used free of charge. Trial versions of software are either time-limited (eg after 30 days they will stop working) or have some features disabled.

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If your CD has been snapped, scratched, corrupted or cracked, please return it to the address below for a free replacement:

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If you don't have a CD at all, call **01202 200200** and we'll send you one free of charge. You can also email **subs@paragon.co.uk**

Help!

If you encounter problems using the CD or installing the software you can email **cdhelp@paragon.co.uk**. Questions will be answered twice daily. Please provide us with as much information about the technical specifications of your machine and the software errors you are receiving as well as quoting the magazine and issue number in your email. Our helpdesk team take calls about disc installation problems on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 6pm. Phone **01202 200259**.

CONTACT:

Tech Support:
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About the CD

Every issue, we scour the Net for the best programs and resources. Here's how your free CD shapes up this month...

Main navigation
Access the main sections of the CD from here

Section title
Each program has its own section for you to browse

Section navigation
Click on the links to move through each section

Content links
Here you'll find links to the files on the CD

How it works

Our aim with every issue's cover disc is to create the perfect complement to the issue itself. This means that navigating the CD should be as easy as reading the magazine, with each section designed to mimic a key area. While many CDs throw huge lists of software at you and expect you to find the programs you're interested in yourself, our CD is different. If you want a Dreamweaver extension, therefore, you'll find it in the Dreamweaver section – which also contains the software itself, as well as a host of other Dreamweaver-related utilities. Each section also contains tutorial files to help you better follow the walkthroughs on each of the key programs. Again, you'll find these essential files stored under each main program heading.

The reason for choosing this method of navigation is a simple one – we want to make your disc as intuitive and straightforward as possible. We hope you find the contents of the disc useful for developing your knowledge – that is the point after all!

The *Practical Internet Web Designer* CD is both PC and Mac friendly. We appreciate how many of you Flash users, for example, create your animations on an Apple machine, so we've tried to assemble a list of software as impressive as the PC section of the disc. What's more, for the first time ever, Mac users can navigate the disc through the same interface as the one on the PC side, making things much more intuitive.

WINDOWS MAC X

ON THE DISC

Look for the logo

This logo appears on many of the tutorials to tell you that the files you need to follow the walkthrough appear on your disc. You'll also find a handy guide to finding the files.

PHOTOSHOP CS IN FOCUS

Unearth all the major tools and features that have made this graphics suite a market leader as we take a look at the key interface elements

Toolbox
A large variety of cursor tools can be selected from this floating panel, including brushes, pens and special effects. There's also a quick launch facility for ImageReady here

Menu bar
The regular command bar organises file actions such as saving and editing, along with tools for working with layers or configuring the workspace

Options bar
This is where the properties or characteristics of a tool can be tweaked to change attributes like style and opacity

Canvas
The canvas area is where all the work happens and can be set to various dimensions. It can also be enlarged or reduced with the Zoom tool

Palettes
These floating dockable panels are used to monitor and manipulate image composition, allowing the direct editing of colour and layer setup

Palette well
Frequently used palettes can be kept within reach here without having to have them open on your workspace

Keyboard Shortcuts

Select brush tool .....B
Select eraser tool.....E
Decrease brush size .....[
Increase brush size .....]
Activate hand tool.....Space
Undo/Redo.....Control/Command & Z
New text layer.....Shift-click
Show/Hide all palettes ....Tab
Merge visible layers .....Control/Command & Shift & E
Edit in ImageReady.....Control/Command & Shift & M

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO IN PHOTOSHOP CS

1: ACCESS FILTERS EASILY
An all-new single dialog Filter Gallery makes accessing, controlling and applying simultaneous effects a breeze. A larger previewing area has also been included to make experimenting with filter combinations far easier.

2: EDIT VIDEO FRAMES
Improved capabilities for video editing include customisable document templates featuring standard video sizes and aspect ratios. Action and title-safe guides also make working with film and DVD work more intuitive.

3: WORK MORE QUICKLY
Enhanced scripting support lets you build macros from scratch or choose from a range of built-in actions. Automating repetitive tasks such as outputting layers to files is easier than ever before and significantly improves workflow.

4: CREATE MASSIVE IMAGES
Take advantage of a new gigantic workspace to create large works like never before, with canvas sizes stretching to 300,000 x 300,000 pixels. Files can also now boast a maximum of 56 channels.

5: INTEGRATE WITH FLASH
Integration with Flash has been enhanced to offer greater export possibilities. Improved vector and text translation now covers dynamic and embedded fonts, while individual layers can be saved as separate SWF files.

IN THIS ISSUE

Find this month's tutorial on creating funky illustrations from still photographs on **pages 36-41**, and learn essential Photoshop tricks along the way.

Give your Web sites the futuristic look with a step-by-step on designing sci-fi styled navigation buttons from **pages 42 to 44**.

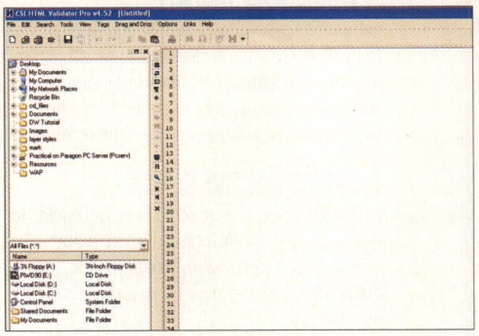
CSE HTML Validator Pro v4.52

GET MORE FROM THIS FULL PROGRAM WORTH £71

Something you may be forgiven for overlooking when it comes to writing Web pages is the small issue of HTML 'correctness'. Although it might sound like some kind of Net-etiquette, this actually refers to the scouring of your page code in order to isolate syntax errors or inconsistencies. Many of the more sophisticated editing suites such as Dreamweaver MX or GoLive have their own such facilities built in, but if you're partial to more simple means or just want some added protection, then this package is a good bet. CSE HTML Validator Pro is a dedicated editing environment that has become a favourite throughout the industry since being designed for a software engineering course at Arlington's University of Texas. Featuring a purposeful design and intuitive interface, it allows you to load raw HTML documents into its integrated parsing window. Pages can then be checked by using a simple one-click validation tool that not only promises to find every error within your pages, but also check up on browser compatibility. This is vitally important to anyone who wants to make sure that unpublished documents will be rendered most accurately, and should become an invaluable asset to the sensible author.

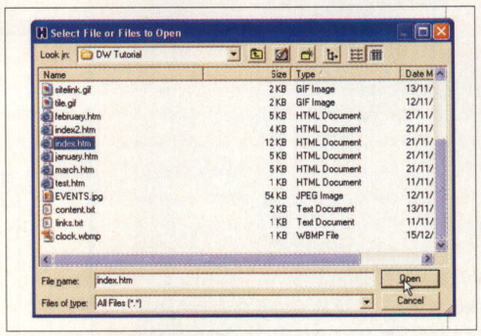
The Professional version also comes equipped with full editing capabilities and an integrated Batch wizard for scanning multiple pages. A special Template tool also lets you make specific code changes automatically, while the HTML itself can be assessed against various accessibility standards.

If this isn't good enough, you can also upgrade to the latest version for a discounted rate of only $99 (£54). Simply visit **www.htmlvalidator.com** to find out more, or email the team as a *Practical Internet Web Designer* reader. Installation and registration details can all be found on this month's cover disc.



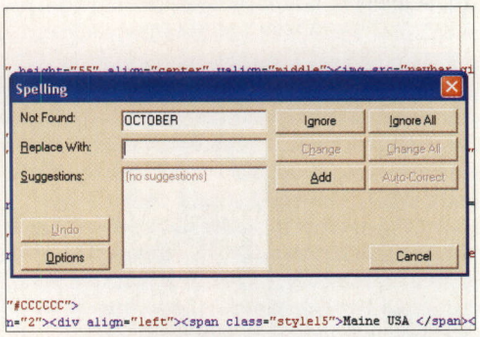
1 CODE SPACE

When you first open the program you'll see that the interface is split into three main windows. The panel on the left is used to locate and select HTML files that you wish to load, while the main editing area is where the code can be checked or changed.



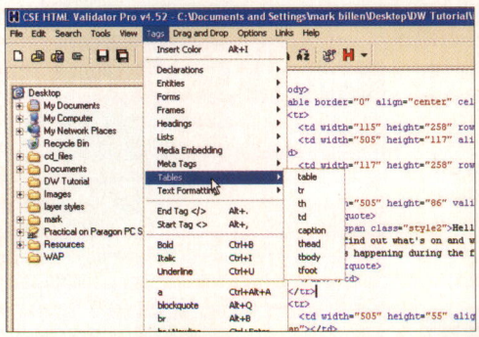
2 OPEN UP

Accessing your saved pages is very simple and can be achieved via the File menu dialog or directly from the panel on the left of the screen. Validator also enables you to quickly view documents from the Web by supplying a valid URL.



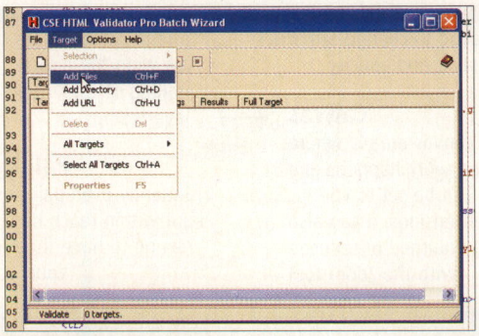
3 SPELLING TEST

A particularly nice feature of this program is the useful facility for performing spelling checks on your markup. This is ideal for pages carrying large portions of text-based content and can be launched via the Tools option on the main menu.



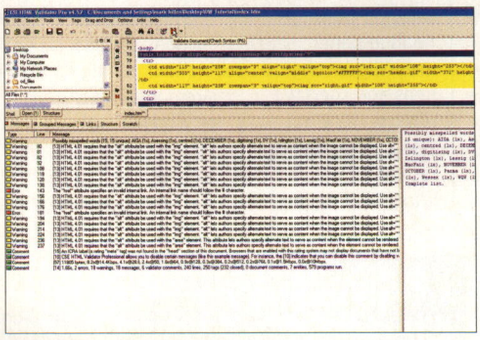
4 TAGGING ALONG

HTML tags can be inserted into the editor using the Tags menu or a series of handy keyboard shortcuts. All the necessary page elements are covered, including those for adding Meta data, plug-ins, tables, images and text.



5 BATCH HELP

The Batch wizard is available through the Tools menu and consists of a dialog which is used to construct and display special lists. You can append files of various formats to this list and apply editing actions simultaneously to speed workflow.



6 VALIDATE THIS

Performing code validations is achieved quickly by simply clicking the red H button or pressing F6. The interface then changes into a Report mode that highlights erroneous lines, while describing a list of problems or recommendations below.

Full CD listing

With two full programs, some excellent trials and more tutorial files than you can shake a stick at, here's your full CD rundown

PC

Software
HTML Validator Professional 4.52
WebSiteWord
EasyWebEditor (Trial)
Dreamweaver MX 2004 (Trial)*
Flash MX 2004 (Trial)*
Adobe Photoshop CS (Trial)†
osCommerce
easy_populate_2.62-m.1

Resources
Felix One
Slicktemplates
Flash Source files

Tutorial files
Pages 36-41
Pages 42-44
Pages 46-50
Pages 52-54
Pages 56-58
Pages 60-64
Pages 66-69
Pages 70-80
Pages 86-87
Pages 88-89
Pages 90-91
Pages 102-108

* Not compatible with Windows Me

† Only compatible with Windows XP

MAC

Software
Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004 (Trial)*
Macromedia Flash MX 2004 (Trial)*

Resources
Felix One
Slicktemplates
Flash Source files

Tutorial files
Pages 36-41
Pages 42-44
Pages 46-50
Pages 52-54
Pages 56-58
Pages 60-64
Pages 66-69
Pages 70-80
Pages 86-87
Pages 88-89
Pages 90-91
Pages 102-108

* Only compatible with OS 10.2.6 or higher

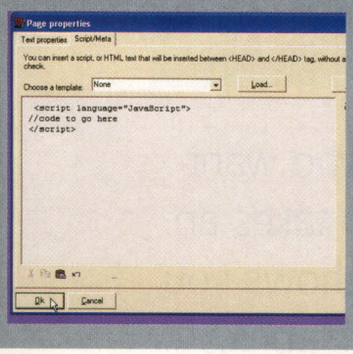
Essential templates
www.slicktemplate.com

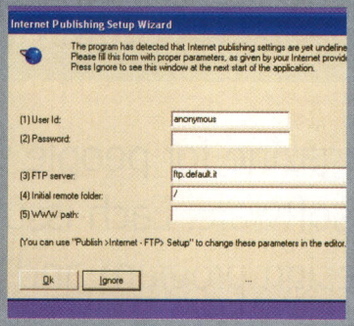
If you're scratching your head over how to give your site the sophisticated look, then it could be time to update your page templates. Admittedly, this is often easier said than done and can require the kind of creative eye most of us would kill for, and a considerable amount of effort. The good news is this month's disc includes a selection of ready-made examples from slicktemplate.com that can save you such bother. With a combined value of £42, the six on show are perfect for adding a touch of class to any domain and feature a bevy of extras too. Each one has its own handy wizard that can be used to not only unpack the many featured fonts, but you can also quickly edit the source code or image files. We can safely say that giving your site the brand new look it deserves has never been easier.

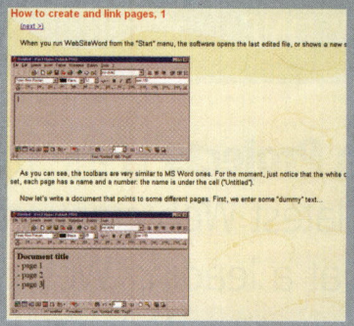
Full version software

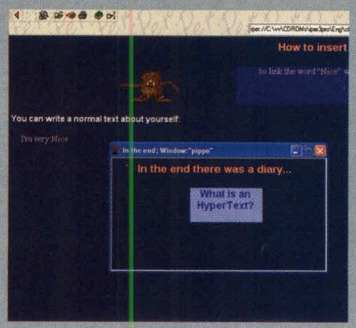
WebSiteWord
www.visualvision.com

One of the biggest obstacles that any budding Web author has to overcome is not only the necessary technical expertise, but also the conceptual theory behind dynamic documents. Page navigation and the weaving of effective hyperlinks throughout a site can be a tough thing to grasp, especially when designing content seems a more natural task. Anyone approaching online development from this perspective will almost certainly be delighted by WebSiteWord's original take on HTML editing, which adequately mimics the functionality of popular Word processors. The immediately accessible and attractive interface exemplifies this beautifully and hides the more intimidating aspects of site development, such as coding, behind familiar icons and buttons. Professional looking pages can be drawn and constructed graphically with everything you need to add images, tables and embedded media. Most importantly, the package uses a working method known as 'What You See Is What You Link', or WYSIWYL, to enable on-the-fly hyperlinking without the need to preview pages. Sites can be strung together almost organically by defining target documents after their source links have been inserted, with anchors made active even during Edit mode. What's more, individual pages are actually merged into one project file that represents the overall site and therefore saves you the time and effort of performing multiple saves. This makes general maintenance or batch updates really simple, because hyperlinked documents can be edited collectively before republishing the changes. An internal FTP facility will take care of recognising and uploading modified content, while the exported HTML is fully optimised for cross-browser support.









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EUPHORIA : :

>Close

Image: Euphoria
Creator: Loyal Chow
URL: www.loyalstudios.com

Euphoria was created by Canadian artist Loyal Chow using 3D Studio Max and Photoshop. We'll let Loyal tell you more: "These are pieces created with no particular agenda. They invoke different meanings to different people. The starting point for this collection was a set of colour schemes and shapes that I associated with a variety of emotions. I simply took the colours and shapes and began to mould them, with no preconceived ideas in mind."

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